

# U.S.-led forces unleash bloody invasion of Iraq

Hundreds of Iraqis killed, maimed by rapidly advancing armies

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

A brutal U.S.-British assault on Iraq, beginning March 20 with what Washington called “surgical” missile strikes, was rapidly turned into a massive aerial bombing of several Iraqi cities together with a ground invasion. The invading armies killed or maimed hundreds of working people and other Iraqis in Baghdad, Basra, Umm Qasr, Nasiriyah, and other cities and towns during the first few days of the imperialist slaughter.

With lightning speed, several armored divisions of the nearly quarter-million U.S. troops and 45,000 British soldiers in the area swept much of the country’s south and began surrounding Baghdad within five days. This is about half the size of the U.S.-led military forces that attacked Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War. U.S. Marines as well as Navy Seals and army special forces are spearheading the onslaught. The imperialist armies encountered relatively small pockets of resistance, taking their first substantial casualties in the battle of Nasiriyah.

As the first U.S. casualties were reported, Washington and the big-business press stepped up their efforts to whip up pro-war sentiment by portraying Iraqis as “war criminals” for supposedly violating the Geneva Convention.

The war is marked by the sharpening conflict between the U.S. and British rulers, on one hand, and Paris and Berlin on the other, in competition for

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Above: U.S. Marines fire mortars in battle at Umm Qasr, southern Iraq, March 23. Left: Iraqis wounded by imperialist bombing.

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(see article page 5)

## Wisconsin meat packers win support in strike against food giant Tyson



Members of UFCW Local 538 on strike against Tyson Foods and their supporters at March 16 rally, which drew hundreds in front of the plant in Jefferson, Wisconsin.

BY PATTIE THOMPSON

JEFFERSON, Wisconsin—Sporting union caps, jackets, and signs, hundreds of strikers, their families, and supporters rallied in front of the Tyson plant here March 16. Members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 538 have been on strike since February 28.

They walked out after nine months of contract negotiations failed to push back the company’s demand for numerous concessions.

Members of a number of unions—auto workers, schoolteachers, public employees, steelworkers, Teamsters, carpenters, and others—as well as other meat packers

joined in with spirited chants and songs in solidarity with the strikers. Mike Rice, business agent for Local 538, chaired the rally. More than a dozen speakers focused on reasons they are standing up to the company attacks or supporting the fight.

Tyson, the world’s largest processor and marketer of chicken, beef, and pork, reported income of more than \$23 billion in 2002. The company employs 120,000 people in 300 facilities in 29 states and 22 countries. It acquired the Jefferson facility along with dozens of other meatpacking and processing plants in its late 2001 purchase of meat giant IBP, Inc.

Many of the homemade signs and banners alluded to the “corporate greed” of this company, most known for its chicken products, and the cynicism of its new marketing slogan, “Tyson: It’s what your family deserves.”

Khadija Boss, 13-year-old daughter of striker Robert Boss, asked participants at the rally, “How is taking away my father’s job or forcing them to take jobs with lower pay good for our families?”

The company’s takeback demands include a two-tier pay scale cutting hourly rates for new hires from \$11.10 to \$9, and freezing pay for others over a four-year period; eliminating pensions for new hires and freezing benefits for the rest; increasing health-care premiums by as much as \$40 a week and eliminating health-care supplements for retirees; cutting sick leave and disability benefits by more than half;

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## Troops out now!

“Stop the slaughter of the Iraqi people! Bring the troops home now!” We urge you to join other *Militant* supporters around the world in winning support for these de-

### EDITORIAL

mands through patient discussion and explanation on the job, at factory gates, in working-class neighborhoods, on picket lines, at street protests, and on campuses.

Washington has unleashed its armed

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## Calero gains backing in Utah for fight against deportation

BY ELIZABETH KIRWIN  
AND FRANCISCO PICADO

SALT LAKE CITY—“We’ve just won another victory,” said Róger Calero to audiences at two meetings here March 10-11. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) had just decided not to contest Calero’s motion to move his immigration hearing from Houston, Texas, to Newark, New Jersey, where he lives and works. The INS subsequently changed the date of the hearing from March to September 10.

Calero’s visit here, part of a nationwide tour, helped build solidarity for the campaign to stop the INS from deporting him to his native Nicaragua.

Calero is an editor of *Perspectiva Mundial*, a Spanish-language monthly published in New York, and a *Militant* staff writer. On December 3 he was returning home to the United States from reporting

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### As we go to press...

The Federal Election Commission has ruled that Socialist Workers candidates remain exempt from federal requirements to report the names of financial contributors to their campaigns. Full coverage of this victory in a future issue.

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# Meat packer dies, casualty of profit drive

BY EDWIN FRUIT

DES MOINES, Iowa—Raúl Pérez-Rojas, 36, died while working on a sanitation crew in a meatpacking plant here on Sunday, February 15. He fell into a grinding machine that was turned on. According to the Polk County medical examiner, the cause of death was blood loss due to traumatic amputation of the legs.

The plant is a cut-and-kill hog operation now called Pine Ridge Farms, Inc., which

## AS I SEE IT

was bought in January from Iowa Packing Company.

I work at the Tyson plant in Perry, Iowa, which is also a cut-and-kill hog operation. A couple of days after the tragedy, the bosses put up in the cafeteria a blow-up poster of the article in the *Des Moines Register* on the worker's death. Above the article, the bosses editorialized that they sympathized with the worker's family and that this showed how important it is for every worker to work safely.

At a line meeting later in the week, the main floor supervisor went through graphic details of the fatal incident. He lectured workers that no one should take unsafe "shortcuts" and blamed the worker in Des Moines, saying he had taken a shortcut that had cost him his life.

While bosses always tell workers to report unsafe conditions, their emphasis is that safety depends on the individual worker. The employers let themselves off the hook.

Last month, supervisors made workers sign a statement that we are individually responsible for job safety. Our union, the United Food and Commercial Workers, moved to get these statements taken out of our files. According to union officials, our contract has a clause stating that the company is responsible for safety on the job. If that were not the case the company could absolve itself from taking care of on-the-job injuries. Having a union does not guarantee better conditions, but it does provide a vehicle for workers to use our collective strength.

Federal statistics show that more injuries occur in the meatpacking industry than any other U.S. industry. Almost one in 10 packinghouse workers suffers a cumulative

trauma injury each year. The Iowa Workforce Development Division of Labor reported that the rate of illness and injury in private companies for 1998 was 9.3 cases per 100 full-time workers. The highest rate, 58.2 per 100 workers, was in meatpacking plants.

There is nothing inherent about this industry, however, that makes it so dangerous. The bosses put workers in the plant on company-organized safety and ergonomics committees, but these committees are a fraud—the bottom line is always production and profit.

Workers labor in close quarters and line speeds are so fast that one can barely do a proper job on each piece of meat. Where I work we get one 15-minute break in the morning, of which five or six minutes are needed to take off and put back on equipment. After lunch we work three or more hours without a break.

Some old-timers report that the union used to have more control of line speed and would deal with problems on the line more quickly. Now if there is a problem, workers have to file a grievance that sometimes takes weeks to settle. Unless the union goes to arbitration, the plant manager is the last resort in settling a grievance.

There is no union at the Pine Ridge Farms plant. We don't know what pressures Pérez-Rojas was under from the bosses to do his job.

Two and a half years ago, however, a number of workers walked off the job at Iowa Packing, protesting job conditions as well as a supervisor's verbal abuse and



Workers process beef at close quarters in Kansas meat plant, January 2004. Meatpacking continues to record the highest injury rate among industries in the United States, as bosses crank up line speed, cut back on breaks, and cut corners on safety in their drive for profit.

favoritism. The workers were summarily fired. They went to court and a settlement was recently reached under which several got their jobs back with a percentage of back pay. In addition, the administrative law judge in the case ordered the company to post a notice informing workers of their right to organize a union, address their working conditions, and that a company rule that automatically fires them if they go on strike or walk out to address working conditions has been terminated.

The majority of workers at Pine Ridge are immigrants from nations in Latin America, Asia, Africa, Bosnia, and other countries. In the last few years, immigrant workers have been among those taking the lead in resisting the brutal conditions that

exist in plants and other industrial workplaces. We have seen this in the successful union organizing drive at Dakota Premium Foods in St. Paul, Minnesota, at meatpacking and poultry plants in Nebraska, in garment shops in Florida, and today at the Co-Op coal mine in Utah.

By fighting, these workers and the ones at Pine Ridge were able to make some gains and push the bosses back a little. Resisting these kinds of conditions and organizing is the only way to help stem the job conditions that led to the death of one of our fellow workers.

*Edwin Fruit is a member of UFCW Local 1149 at the Tyson plant in Perry, Iowa.*

## Houston students protest army spying at campus

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

HOUSTON—Speaking to the media at the University of Texas in Austin February 13, law student Sahar Aziz protested a recent incident of spying on campus by

agents of the U.S. Army. She spoke on behalf of organizers of a February 4 academic gathering titled, "Islam and the Law: The Question of Sexism?" which plainclothes military personnel had attended.

Less than a week after that event, two Army agents came to campus to ask the organizers for a video of the proceedings, and a list of those who had taken part in it. Aziz told the press conference that organizers refused to hand over to the Army the information demanded by the agents. "We believe that it is inappropriate for us to invite the public and the student body to come and freely exchange ideas and then to turn around and relay their personal information to the intelligence community," she said.

The two agents who arrived on campus February 9 to knock on doors for more information claimed they were following up on reports by the two agents, Army lawyers, who had attended the "Islam and the Law" event. The agents said they wanted the details about the participants because

the lawyers had stated that they'd been approached by "suspicious" Middle Eastern men, said Aziz.

"Why would three Middle Eastern men come up to these men and ask what's up with the military?" stated Maunica Sthan-ki, student vice president of the National Lawyers Guild. "That's absurd." The guild was one of the organizations that sponsored the academic conference—others included the university's law school, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, the *Texas Journal of Women and the Law*, and the Muslim Law Students Association.

Jim Harrington of the Texas Civil Rights Project said at the press conference that the agents' tactics were calculated to "intimidate and scare people from using the First Amendment."

He added, "We're going to make the Army back off—and all the other intelligence operations—in the name of the First Amendment, or we're going to see them in court."

## THE MILITANT

### Imperialist troops out of Haiti

*In the wake of the rightist takeover in Haiti, U.S., French, and Canadian troops have been deployed in that country, as Washington seeks to put together a regime beholden to its interests. The 'Militant' presents the facts and explains these events. Don't miss a single issue!*



U.S. Marine at Port-au-Prince airport, March 1.

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## The Militant

Vol. 68/No. 11

Closing news date: March 9, 2004

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Published weekly except for one week in January, July, and September.  
The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018. Telephone: (212) 244-4899; Fax (212) 244-4947.  
**E-mail:** TheMilitant@verizon.net  
The Militant **website** is: [www.themilitant.com](http://www.themilitant.com)

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to The Militant Business Office, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.  
Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.  
**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Subscriptions: **United States:** for one-year subscription send \$35 to above address.

**Latin America, Caribbean:** for one-year subscription send \$65, drawn on a U.S. bank, to above address. By first-class (airmail), send \$80.

**Africa, Asia, and the Middle East:** Send \$65 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

**Canada:** Send Canadian \$50 for one-year subscription to Militant, 1237 Jean-Talon est, Montréal, QC. Postal Code: H2R 1W1.

**United Kingdom:** £25 for one year by check or international money order made out to Militant Distribution, 47 The Cut, London, SE1 8LF, England.

**Republic of Ireland and Continental Europe:** £70 for one year by check or international money order made out to Militant Distribution at above address. **France:** Send 115 euros for one-year subscription to Militant, Centre MBE 175, 23 rue Lecourbe, 75015 Paris; chèque postale: 40 134 34 U.

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# Australian gov't robs gas deposits from East Timor

BY DOUG COOPER

SYDNEY, Australia— The Australian government has bullied the newly independent government of East Timor into giving up its right to billions of dollars in revenue from natural gas and oil deposits that lie between the two countries under the Timor Sea in the Pacific. Canberra used a March 11 deadline from petroleum giant ConocoPhillips as the justification.

The Australian Senate ratified the Timor Sea Treaty March 6. The treaty provides for 90 percent of revenue from the Bayu-Undan gas field to go to East Timor and 10 percent to Australia. Ratification occurred only after the East Timorese government of Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri signed a separate agreement. That accord gave Canberra rights to the lion's share of revenue from two other fields that are claimed by East Timor as part of its territorial waters.

Canberra will take 82 percent of the Greater Sunrise gas field revenues and 100 percent from the Laminara Corallina oilfield when they eventually come on line. Together they are twice the size of Bayu-Undan. All of Bayu-Undan lies inside an

agreed joint production area but only 20 percent of Greater Sunrise does.

ConocoPhillips, claiming pressure from its intended customers, had threatened to pull out of its promised investments unless the treaty was signed by March 11. The company was committed to build a pipeline from Bayu-Undan to Darwin, Australia, the capital of the Northern Territory, and to process the liquefied natural gas for export to Japan.

"The Australians are trying to force us to give up on our claims on Sunrise," Alkatiri told the *Sydney Morning Herald* February 27. "Their tactics are very clear. Australia knows that these revenues are vital for us. I am very surprised by their attitude. I never thought a democratic country like Australia would play this kind of role with a poor neighbour."

A senior Timorese official described a March 5 phone call from Australia's prime minister, John Howard, to Alkatiri as "an



Australian troops, left, and Indonesian soldiers, atop vehicle, with United Nations personnel at Motaain Bridge on East-West Timor border, September 2000. The government of Australia led the imperialist forces that were sent to East Timor under UN auspices in 1999 supposedly to safeguard the Pacific island nation's independence. Now Canberra is using its military and economic muscle to rob massive natural gas and oil deposits from East Timor, reinforcing its semicolonial status.

ultimatum."

"Howard said that unless we agreed to sign the new deal immediately, he would stop the Senate approving the treaty," the official noted. "They were treating him as if he was a child and he is offended. The Australians have shown great disrespect to the institutions of another sovereign nation," a Timorese official told the *Sydney Morning Herald*. "This sort of thing goes

down like a lead balloon in Dili. The Timorese were pushed around for too long by the Indonesians. We don't want another big neighbour telling us what to do."

## 'A tutorial' in imperialist politics

Howard's demand was a continuation of Canberra's imperial arrogance throughout negotiations between the two governments. It built on the fact that Australian armed forces were the bulk of UN-sanctioned troops sent to East Timor as "peacekeepers" to supposedly safeguard the country's independence in 1999.

A leaked transcript of a Nov. 27, 2002, negotiating session in Dili records the East Timorese prime minister complaining to Australia's foreign minister, Alexander Downer, that the Australia government was insisting on boundaries it had negotiated years ago with Indonesia, and offering his country "scrapings off a plate." Downer vehemently replied: "We are not going to [re]negotiate the Timor Sea Treaty—understand that. It doesn't matter what your Western advisers say.... There will be no new joint development area for Greater Sunrise.... We are very tough. We will not care if you give information to the media. Let me give you a tutorial in politics—not a chance."

The East Timor government claims its maritime boundary as the middle of the Timor Sea, while Canberra claims three-quarters of the area between the two countries. As part of its course of action, Canberra withdrew from the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in 2002.

Downer and other cabinet ministers, in Dili for the March 6 signing of the separate Greater Sunrise and Laminara Corallina agreement, claimed the package would promote the long-term stability and prosperity of East Timor. Their statement also noted, "These projects will be of great benefit to Australia, in particular through downstream investment and employment in the Northern Territory."

Sen. Robert Brown, the leader of the Greens in Australia's parliament, was ejected from the Senate for the rest of the day on March 6 after refusing to retract or reword the term "blackmail" to describe the pressures brought to bear on the East Timor government.

In related developments, as part of Canberra's ongoing assault on immigrant rights, 1,600 East Timorese refugees, some of whom have lived in Australia for a decade or were born here, face deportation now that Indonesian rule has ended. To date nearly 1,100 applications for permanent residence have been rejected. None has been approved.

*Doug Cooper is a member of the Maritime Union of Australia.*

# In cold blood, Israeli army killed U.S. student supporting Palestinians

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Rachel Corrie, a student at Evergreen State College in Washington, was crushed to death by an Israeli army bulldozer on March 16, as she knelt in its path to stop the destruction of a Palestinian house in Rafah, the southern Gaza Strip.

The 23-year-old was wearing a bright orange vest at the time, and used a megaphone to urge the driver of the heavily armored vehicle to turn back, following the procedures adopted by the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), a U.S.-based organization.

"We were shouting and waving our arms at the driver," said Tom Dale, another ISM activist, to the *New York Times*. "We even had a megaphone."

"She thought they'd stop, but they kept going," said Dale, who is from the United Kingdom, in another interview. "She tried to stand up and fell over backwards. The bulldozer dragged her under its blade."

Protester Greg Schnabel said that the machine had "completely run over her and then it reversed and ran back over her." Corrie died of head and chest injuries by the time she reached Rafah's nearby Najar hospital.

Michael Shaik, a spokesman for the solidarity group, noted that Israeli soldiers "have shot over our heads, and shot near our feet—they have fired tear gas at us. But we thought we had an understanding. We didn't think they would kill us."

In a March 17 statement the Israeli military claimed, "The bulldozer operator did not see the woman."

The soldiers "were dealing with a group of protesters who were acting very irresponsibly, putting everybody in danger—the Palestinians, themselves and our forces," said an Israeli official, "by intentionally placing themselves in a combat zone."

Three days later the same bulldozer was among the vehicles of an Israeli unit that disrupted Corrie's memorial service, held at the spot at which she had been run over.

## 'Systematic destruction' of housing

The soldiers tried to break up the service, reported the UK *Guardian*. "They started firing tear gas and blowing smoke, then they fired sound grenades.... Then the tank came over and shot in the air," said Joe Smith, from Kansas City.

At a memorial event in Gaza City Palestinians carried mock coffins of the young woman. Residents of Olympia, Washing-

ton—Corrie's home city—organized a vigil on the day of her death, while fellow students at Evergreen State College erected a shrine in her honor.

Corrie had lived with Palestinian families in Rafah for two months in an area where many houses had been demolished. "I feel like what I'm witnessing here is a very systematic destruction of people's ability to survive," she told reporters two days before her death.

"I am in Rafah, a city of about 140,000 people approximately 60 percent of whom are refugees," Corrie had written in a February 7 letter to her family.

Rafah has stood in the Sinai desert since before the creation of the Israeli state. Following Tel Aviv's wars of occupation, it is divided between Egyptian and Israeli territory.



"Currently, the Israeli army is building a 14-meter-high wall between Rafah in Palestine and the border, carving a no-man's land from the houses along the border," Corrie wrote. "Six hundred and two homes have been completely bulldozed, according to the Rafah Popular Refugee Committee."

The Associated Press reported on March 16 that "Israel sends tanks and bulldozers into the area almost every day, destroying



International Solidarity Movement photos Rachel Corrie (left), 23, a student at Evergreen college in Washington state, was killed by Israeli army with bulldozer March 16. Photos above show Corrie trying to speak to bulldozer driver through megaphone minutes before she was hit, and immediately after she was run over.

buildings near the Gaza-Egypt border."

According to the Palestine Ministry of Health, Israeli assaults in February killed 82 Palestinians and wounded 616 others, sparking renewed resistance and large turn-outs at funeral marches in the occupied territories. Two weeks before Corrie's murder a military bulldozer had killed a nine-month pregnant Palestinian woman, Nuha Sweidan, while destroying a house next door in a Gaza refugee camp.

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# War, labor resistance discussed at N.Y. event

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

NEW YORK—From the union fight by 450 meatpacking workers on strike against Tyson Foods in Wisconsin, to the unleashing of the U.S.-British slaughter of the Iraqi people, a March 23 public meeting here addressed some of the major developments in world politics facing working people today. The event, entitled “The working-class response to imperialism’s assault on Iraq and deepening world depression,” was attended by some 270 people.

The meeting was part of a weekend of political activity by dozens of supporters of the communist movement, many of whom had come from cities around the country as well as Canada. They joined teams to do construction work, organize political files, and pack and move boxes. This was part of a final week of work to reorganize and relocate the editorial offices of *Pathfinder* and the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, as well as the national office of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Some of the volunteers also participated in the large antiwar demonstration that Saturday.

On March 24, socialist meat packers, coal miners, and garment and textile workers from across the country met to discuss “joining with fighting co-workers to find ways to resist the bosses’ offensive at home, abroad, and along the borders,” as the flyer for the meeting described the culmination of the three days of activities.

Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes was the featured speaker at the event. Also speaking were SWP leaders Joel Britton, James Harris, and Mary-Alice Waters. Naomi Craine, chairperson of the SWP in New York City, moderated the meeting.

James Harris, a member of the SWP National Committee who works as a sewing machine operator in Atlanta, described the participation of socialists in the antiwar march of the previous day, where they had met a number of young people interested in a revolutionary perspective who had purchased the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and *Pathfinder* books to find answers to their questions (see article on page 15).

## Cuba in Washington’s crosshairs

Mary-Alice Waters described the importance of moving the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* and the SWP national office into offices suitable for their political needs. A \$13,000 fund was launched to make the reorganization and move possible, and participants in the meeting responded by contributing or pledging almost \$9,000 (see article on page 5).

Waters also drew the audience’s attention to Washington’s current moves to intensify its pressure on Havana, including new restrictions on Cuban representatives and stepped-up meddling and provocations by U.S. diplomatic personnel on the island. These actions are part of a 44-year-long campaign of economic, military, and diplomatic aggression by the U.S. rulers that does not cease. “Cuba is always in their crosshairs because of the example the Cuban Revolution represents in the world,” she said.

The U.S. government’s latest efforts to isolate and break the spirit of five Cuban revolutionaries jailed on frame-up “conspiracy” charges are part of these attacks, she noted. The five were recently thrown into solitary confinement.

Washington is attacking the five patriots, Waters said, because of the effective political work they are carrying out among



Militant/Linda Joyce

**March 23 meeting discussed working-class response to war and depression. Right: SWP national secretary Jack Barnes, the featured speaker.**

fellow inmates and their contact and collaboration with other revolutionaries and political activists across the United States.

She explained that the refusal by U.S. authorities to grant visas to two Cuban youth leaders is part of this stepped-up U.S. pressure. The two were supposed to have arrived in the United States March 19 to start a speaking tour at several universities across the country. Waters reported that at a campus in Long Beach, California, where the Cuban youth had been invited to speak, a public meeting was held to protest the State Department’s actions.

Joel Britton, a member of the steering committee of the Socialist Workers Party’s national fraction of workers in the United Food and Commercial Workers union, explained the centrality of the resistance by workers and farmers in the United States today, particularly in face of the bosses’ demands that they subordinate their struggles to “national unity” and “homeland defense.” Meat packers in the Midwest have stepped up their struggles for union rights and dignity, he said. Union fighters, from those involved in organizing drives in Omaha to the supporters of the campaign to stop the deportation of *Militant* staff writer Róger Calero, have an important struggle to reach out to right now, he said—the strike by 450 meat packers in Wisconsin standing up to Tyson.

Publicity released by the striking local declares that “failure is not an option,” said Britton, “and that captures the spirit of these strikers.” Broadening their experiences through traveling “Truth Squads” and on the picket lines, they are working through how to defeat the company’s scab-herding efforts, and have been impressed by the role played by immigrant workers in union-organizing drives in other cities they have visited.

Meanwhile, he said, the bosses at Dakota Premium in St. Paul, Minnesota, have started to bring the war home, blocking workers’ relatives from bringing them meals onto the site, citing new “food security” measures announced by the Homeland Security Department.

“Wars don’t change the underlying trends of politics,” said Jack Barnes. “The curves of capitalist development are determined by deeper laws of the class struggle.” What wars do, he said, is accelerate, as nothing else does, the unfolding of that struggle.

Throughout a century of imperialist history, he said, a vanguard of conscious workers has not wavered from the understanding that the capitalist system breeds war, most fundamentally among the imperialist powers. But for decades after World War II, the idea of an interimperialist war seemed unimaginable to most people. Because of the more open tensions today between Washington and London, on one hand, and Paris and Berlin, on the other, such a conflict between the imperialist powers is more apparent to millions. To many, it is more evident than before that the ultimate logic of the current war over the Mideast is toward interimperialist war.

The idea that nuclear weapons would never again be used

is also being shattered, Barnes said. The growing spread of nuclear weapons, which Washington has used and will use again, threatens to increase the destructive impact of such conflicts.

The imperialist rulers will win more support for their current war as the U.S. and British body count goes up, Barnes said. Yellow ribbons to “support our troops” can be expected to reappear, he stated. This combines with the “orange alert” decreed by Washington’s Homeland Security and other “terrorism” scares under which the National Guard and cops have increasingly been deployed at train stations, airports, bridges, and highways in the United States.

The war now becomes more difficult and bloody, as the rulers anticipated, Barnes said. Over the coming days, he said, the “surgical” strikes would give way to massive bombings typical of imperialist wars, and the “war of liberation” would become a slaughter.

The Gulf War of 12 years ago was marked above all by sharpening competition among the major imperialist powers, Barnes said. In 1991, having used their armed forces to pulverize Iraqi cities, expel the Iraqi army from Kuwait, and organize a slaughter of retreating soldiers and civilians, he said, “the U.S. ruling class blinked.” A narrow majority decided against a drive to Baghdad to overthrow Saddam Hussein, thinking they could hold together their “alliance,” including Paris and Berlin, and complete the job with a bigger coalition than they have today. “They won’t make that mistake again,” he added.

“Toward the end of the 1990s, Barnes said, “the economic boom came to an end,” further accentuating the interimperialist tensions. We are in the “very initial stages of a world depression,” he said, notwithstanding the “prayerful buying of stocks” since the launch of the Iraq assault that sparked the biggest stock market rally in two decades.

In fact, the day after the New York meeting, the stock market suffered its worst fall of the year to date. Investors’ euphoria was shaken by news that the imperialist advance in Iraq had slowed in the face of tough resistance by Iraqi soldiers and civilians. The 300-point loss wiped out more than one-third of the previous week’s gains. “The market’s no place for investors right now,” said one “senior equity analyst.”

## Shattering of old institutions

Battered by round after round of trade, diplomatic, and military conflicts among the major imperialist powers, the “civilized edifices” of imperialism—among them the United Nations, NATO, and the European Union—have started coming apart, Barnes said. For example, today two NATO members—the U.S. and Turkish governments—could end up in a military confrontation at the Iraqi-Turkish border. Likewise, the United Nations can be used less and less as an effective instrument of imperialism because of these stiffening conflicts.

The relations between the rulers of France and the United Kingdom have deteriorated most sharply of all, said Barnes. Tensions have built up over the past several years and more, as London has kept its distance from a “united Europe.” The

British capitalists have refused to submerge the pound into the euro—dominated by the German mark and French franc—because they would lose the enormous advantage of retaining a national currency.

British deaths in combat ensure that London’s armed forces are being “blooded and wed together” with those of Washington.

As these conflicts sharpen, he said, the big-business media in the United States has suddenly discovered the bloody record of French imperialism. No doubt the French press will also be publishing revelations about the brutal history of the U.S. rulers, who offer them an embarrassment of riches in this regard, said Barnes.

The French diplomatic links and trade ties with the government of Saddam Hussein, worth billions of dollars, are major factors in the sharply conflicting interests of Paris and Washington in the Mideast, the SWP leader said. It was French capitalists who supplied aid and technology to Iraq to build the Osirak nuclear reactor. Paris has never forgiven the Israeli regime for sending the bombers that reduced the reactor to rubble in 1981, Barnes said.

If Washington gets the victory it is driving toward, it will be in position to threaten and shape many of the semicolonial governments of the Gulf region, Barnes noted.

Washington would get its hands on more than the Iraqi oil deposits, he said. Even more importantly, its victory would protect and reinforce the monopoly position of the dollar as the currency with which this key commodity is traded. Members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) only accept dollars for oil—except for Iraq, which has only accepted euros for their oil since 2000. Iran, too, is considering a switch to the euro for oil.

A U.S.-British victory against Iraq would set the stage for the preparation of a military assault against Iran and/or north Korea, which, together with Iraq, are three points along the “axis of evil” proclaimed by President George Bush. Other unnamed points on this “axis” include the Cuban Revolution, Barnes said.

While Washington and London are strengthening their position against their imperialist rivals, he said, the notion of a united Europe under German domination that is able to increasingly challenge Washington in the imperialist pecking order is disappearing.

The German capitalists are fatally handicapped by their inability to assimilate the workers state in the East, “like a python that cannot swallow the biggest meal imaginable,” said Barnes. The incorporation of the workers states of central and Eastern Europe will not strengthen the European Union as an imperialist pole, but rather will bring more conflicts, he said.

For Washington, however, this outlook is clouded by the fact that, from a historical rather than short-term point of view, its uncontested economic power is coming to an end, undermined by depression and other inherent weaknesses of the capitalist system. In this context, working-class struggles today have special importance, he added.

The coalescing of a working-class vanguard, including the Midwest packers, is a sign of the times, he said. The potential for this development to strengthen can be seen in the actions by a number of fighting workers in the Midwest who have taken up Róger Calero’s defense campaign as their own.

Into these unfolding experiences, said Barnes, worker-Bolsheviks need to bring the lessons of the past and their understanding of politics today. “We need to find ways of discussing with others the dynamics of capitalist politics,” he said, “including its tendency toward more violence and the use of extralegal gangs by the bosses” as the social crisis sharpens. In doing so, vanguard workers can prepare politically for the time when the workers movement will need to build its own self-defense guards, a step that underscores the necessity of organizing a revolutionary struggle for political power. Strike pickets are the basic nuclei of such a proletarian army, he stated.

From among the ranks of the young antiwar protesters as well as young working-class militants, he said, will be those driven by their experience in the class struggle to read and study Marxism and broaden their vision. The communist movement will win new recruits among them.

Coming Soon

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## CAPITALISM’S LONG HOT WINTER HAS BEGUN

by Jack Barnes

We’re in the opening stages of the winter of a world depression, writes Jack Barnes. “Given the accompanying acceleration of imperialism’s drive toward war, it’s going to be a long, hot winter. And, even more important, one that will slowly but surely and explosively breed a scope and depth of resistance not previously seen by the great majority of revolutionary-minded militants in today’s world.”



Available soon at [www.pathfinderpress.com](http://www.pathfinderpress.com)



# Funds are needed for ‘Militant’ relocation

BY SAM MANUEL

NEWYORK—At the Sunday afternoon program that culminated the March 22–23 Red Weekend activities here, participants contributed and pledged \$8,890 towards a \$13,000 fund that will cover the costs of moving the *Militant/Perspectiva Mundial* and the national office of the Socialist Workers Party to new quarters.

Supporters of the *Militant* throughout the country are organizing to collect the remaining pledges, and to get new contributions from those who were not able to attend the meeting, in order to meet the goal by the target date of April 7.

Naomi Craine, the chairperson of the SWP in New York, told the meeting of 270 people that volunteers had completed the frames for the walls in the new offices over the previous day and a half. As well, she said, an electrical crew had gotten a good start on running the wiring for electrical power, computer terminals, and phone lines.

By the time this *Militant* “goes to bed,” said Craine, work will have progressed substantially in setting up the new office. “The paper won’t miss a beat in campaigning against the imperialist slaughter in

Iraq,” she said.

Craine explained that the new offices are located just blocks from the current hall of the New York SWP, right in the heart of Manhattan’s Garment District. Thousands of sewers toil in factories in the area. The hall is the venue for the weekly Militant Labor Forum and the Pathfinder Bookstore.

“This move will help to build on the accomplishment of the New York branch, forum series, and bookstore,” she said.

For decades the socialist publications and national party offices have been located in the six-story Pathfinder Building on the southwest side of Manhattan. “When we started this process almost a year ago,” said Mary-Alice Waters, the president of Pathfinder Press and editor of *New International*, “we said we were not just moving a building, but that in the process of moving we would also transform our functioning to serve the needs and maximize the effectiveness of a movement of our size and capacities.”

The Pathfinder editorial staff moved to another Garment District location a day after the meeting. “No desk, no piece of equipment, not even one file—whether



Militant/Eric Simpson  
Volunteers renovate the new offices, above, and prepare the move from the old, right.



paper or virtual”—had been taken from the building without being reviewed and a decision made about what to do with it, Waters said. The same process will now be completed at the *Militant* and SWP national office at their new locations.

“When the Gulf War started just 12 years ago,” said Waters, “We had not yet started to use computers in our publishing work.” Today, with the support of hundreds of hardworking volunteers around the world, all of the work related to Pathfinder’s pub-

lishing program is done using e-mail, computer networks, and the Internet, Waters said.

What had been accomplished over the weekend and will be completed soon “registers one of the historic achievements” of the communist movement, said the SWP leader.

Contributions to the construction fund should be mailed to the *Militant* at 152 W. 36th Street, Suite 401, New York, NY, 10018. Checks or money orders should be made out to the *Militant*.

## Washington’s provocations heighten tensions with Cuba

BY SAM MANUEL

U.S. officials have announced that staff of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington will be restricted to the Beltway, a section of interstate highway which roughly corresponds to the boundaries of the U.S. capitol. The move was one of a string of U.S. actions and statements that have increased tensions between the two countries.

The Cuban government stated on March 18 that it has restricted the movement of U.S. diplomats on the island “in response to measures adopted...against our personnel in Washington.”

The Cuban statement emphasized that Havana “goes to great lengths to comply with the norms and principles regulating diplomatic relations between states.” After U.S. actions, however, it “now finds itself obliged to curtail the...movements” of U.S. representatives.

Staff of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana will now have to receive approval for travel beyond Havana province.

Before Washington imposed the restrictions on Cuban diplomats, they only needed to inform U.S. authorities of any travel plans. Cuban personnel at the United

Nations, on the other hand, have always been required to receive permission to travel outside of the Manhattan area.

Washington broke diplomatic relations with Havana in 1961. Their diplomats function out of interests sections hosted by third countries.

The Cuban statement also denounced the “repeated provocations by the head of the U.S. Interest Section in Cuba.... No country has the right to turn its diplomatic representation into a...general quarters in order to...subvert constitutional order,” it read.

Section head James Cason has invited “dissidents” to use his official residence to hold press conferences opposing the revolutionary government. According to U.S. officials, he has traveled 6,200 miles since his arrival last summer.

U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said that Cason has “visited with Cuban people in their homes. He’s visited independent libraries. He’s visited other independent voices.”

Havana has announced the arrests of dozens of individuals in connection with Cason’s “conspiratorial activities.”

Boucher called on the UN Commission

on Human Rights, of which Cuba is a member, to condemn the arrests “in the strongest terms.” Over the years Washington has consistently pressed the commission to issue such condemnations of the revolutionary government.

At the same time, Cuban officials explain that Washington has increased funding for “independent” groups of self-professed unionists, journalists, librarians, media, and human rights associations on the island.

U.S. diplomatic staff in Havana have handed out propaganda and free shortwave radios to enable people to listen to Radio Martí. The U.S.-funded radio station in Miami broadcasts news and commentary by opponents of the Cuban revolution.

On March 3 U.S. federal prison authorities ordered five Cuban revolutionaries held in U.S. jails to be placed in solitary confinement. The Cuban statement called the action “cowardly” and “vengeful.” The five Cubans were in the United States gathering infor-

mation on groups who have committed violent acts against the revolution, using U.S. soil as a base. They were framed up and convicted in a U.S. court on “conspiracy” charges, including conspiracy to commit espionage.

The day following the Cuban statement six people hijacked a Cuban airliner headed from the Isle of Youth to Havana and forced the pilot to land in Key West, Florida. Cuba demanded the immediate return of the plane, its crew, passengers and the highjackers. Sixteen of the Cubans returned to Havana March 22. The six highjackers have been arrested on charges of federal air piracy. If convicted, they face a minimum of 20 years in prison.

## Students protest denial of visas to Cubans

BY FRANK FORRESTAL

LONG BEACH, California—Around 50 students and professors attended a March 20 meeting at the college campus here, called to defend freedom of speech and academic exchange. The meeting was organized at the California State University Long Beach campus (CSULB) to protest the State Department’s denial of entry into the United States of two Cuban students.

Ernesto Fernández Sánchez, a member of the National Secretariat of the Federation of University Students of Cuba, and Estela Zulueta Valdés, a law student at the University of Havana, were scheduled to speak on the campus that day. As of March 25, they had still not received the visas they applied for more than two months earlier.

Sánchez and Zulueta were set to arrive March 19 to begin a month-long speaking tour of U.S. campuses. Under the auspices

of the Long Beach-based Committee for U.S.-Cuba Academic Exchange, 29 professors had written to invite them to speak in seven states and the District of Columbia.

Roxana Leiva, a graduate student at CSULB, opened the March 20 meeting. “The participants in this meeting...send you warm greetings of solidarity,” she said, reading from a letter to the two Cuban students.

“We strongly protest the moves by the U.S. State Department to delay the decision on your visa applications,” she continued, “in order to de facto deny you entry into the United States. We consider this act by the U.S. government an attack on academic freedom and on the exchange of ideas.”

Cuba’s only threat to the U.S. government is the example of its revolution, “which we have a lot to learn from,” said Professor Eugene Ruyle, who chairs the academic exchange committee.

After being told by State Department officials that the visas were awaiting “security clearance,” Ruyle had urged the professors who had sent invitations to contact the department and ask that the visas be granted. Many made calls in response to this appeal. A government spokesperson told several that “we’re in a time of war,” and that Cuba is on a list of countries that “support terrorism.”

Emily Paul, a CSULB student who is also on the committee, encouraged participants in the event to sign a protest petition. Greetings were presented to the meeting from the

head of the Long Beach student government and from the African Student Union.

### Cuban scholars granted visas

Following a protest campaign by organizers of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) conference, 70 Cuban invitees have been granted visas to attend the conference. Organizers had asked people to contact the State Department and ask that the visas for 103 Cubans be issued in time for them to participate in the event, which will be held in Dallas March 27–29.

Among the 33 whose visas were not granted were two of the three Cuban members of the Executive Committee of the LASA Section for Scholarly Relations with Cuba.

“The reasons given by U.S. consular officials were based on the Immigration and Nationality Act,” said Eloise Linger, who is a co-chair of the committee. The act “has been used in the past to deny visas on the basis of membership in Cuba’s Communist Party, and/or simply to anyone deemed to be detrimental to the interests of the United States,” she said.

### \$85,000 Militant Fund March 10–May 12

	Goal	Paid	%
<b>Philadelphia PA</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>17%</b>
Boston MA	2,800	250	9%
New York NY	7,500	660	9%
San Francisco CA	7,000	300	4%
Detroit MI	3,000	100	3%
Washington DC	2,200	70	3%
Omaha NE	900	10	1%
Cleveland OH	1,100	5	0%
Charlotte NC	3,000	10	0%
Atlanta GA	4,100	0	0%
Birmingham AL	2,500	0	0%
Chicago IL	4,200	0	0%
Des Moines IA	900	0	0%
Houston TX	3,200	0	0%
Los Angeles CA	7,500	0	0%
Miami FL	1,600	0	0%
Newark NJ	3,800	0	0%
Northeast PA	1,600	0	0%
Pittsburgh PA	3,000	0	0%
Seattle WA	6,000	0	0%
Tampa FL	1,800	0	0%
Tucson AZ			
Twin Cities MN	3,000	0	0%
Utah	800	0	0%
Western CO			
Other		6	
<b>U.S. total</b>	<b>74,500</b>	<b>1,911</b>	<b>3</b>
United Kingdom	500	10	0
Australia	1,000	0	0%
Canada	3,460	0	0%
France			
Iceland	150	0	0%
New Zealand	1,500	0	0%
Sweden	400	0	0%
<b>International total</b>	<b>81,510</b>	<b>1,921</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Int'l goal/Should be</b>	<b>85,000</b>	<b>9,435</b>	<b>11%</b>

### Fund goal raised

Because of higher-than-expected pledges from contributors around the world, the international goal for the Militant Fund has been raised from \$75,000 to \$85,000 (see chart at right.) However, funds received so far are 9 percent behind schedule, and they are needed to help pay bills now. We urge you to send your contribution today.



# Róger Calero wins new support in Utah

**Continued from front page**

trips to Cuba and Mexico. INS agents seized Calero at Houston Intercontinental Airport, told him he was denied entry to the United States, and carted him off to an immigration jail. He was later released after hundreds of people poured messages of protest in to the INS office in Texas. He now faces exclusion from this country. Immigration officials began deportation proceedings against him based on a 1988 plea-bargain conviction, when he was a high school student, for selling an ounce of marijuana to an undercover cop. The INS waived this conviction in granting him permanent residency, which Calero has held for 13 years, and then in renewing it in the year 2000.

Some 45 people took part in the meetings here, which were followed by lively discussion. “I have visited 16 other cities and have met with a growing number of people who are speaking out against similar injustices,” said Calero at the Northwest Multipurpose Center event here March 10.

“What is the most effective way to fight?” asked Jorge Riveros, a journalist for the Spanish-language monthly magazine *Nuestro Mundo*. He described the growing distrust of police by Latino workers in face of stepped up harassment by cops in this area. In February, the INS raided a factory in the Provo, Utah, area and arrested over 100 workers, most from Mexico. More than 50 have been deported and the rest remain in jail. Several protests have taken place at the state capitol building in Salt Lake City to demand justice for these workers. “INS raids and harassment of immigrants will get worse. We need to get more organized,” Riveros said.

Calero pointed to the need to reach out to working people of all nationalities and defend immigrant workers. “Many see in this struggle their fight,” Calero said. “We need to turn to all labor struggles and lend support, and reject the notion of denial of rights to a certain layer. Working people can see the stakes involved in allowing the government to prosecute you twice for the same offense.”

Calero said he had met the day before with coal miners in Rangely, Colorado, who are members of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1984. “They related periodic experiences of being stopped by the cops,” he stated. “They understood what a problem it would be if the cops had the right to keep going after you for anything they prosecuted you for in the past.”

Some 1,300 copper miners and smelter workers at the huge Kennecott Utah Copper Co. are fighting steep concessions that “affect workers’ lives in every way,” said John Langford, a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 392, who spoke along with Calero at the Northwest Multipurpose Center. He told the audience that the company imposed concessions on the work force in October that gut seniority, retirement, and health care, and “go after retirees with a vengeance.” Langford described actions workers have been taking to resist these moves and invited participants to join him and his coworkers in a protest.

At the University of Utah the next day Calero was hosted by the Student Labor Action Project (SLAP), a campus organization that promotes justice for employees at the school and in the community. Over 20 students, many from the Economics Department, and others took part in the noon event. Luis Clemente, a worker from Mexico, came after hearing Calero the night before. Later that afternoon, Clemente accompanied Calero to an interview at KRCL radio.

An Iraqi student asked Calero how the

U.S.A. Patriot Act has affected his status. Calero said that many of the laws being used today against immigrants and other workers precede the Bush administration or are built on previous legislation passed during the eight years of William Clinton in the White House. Washington has accelerated these attacks on workers’ rights, he stated, as the capitalist system worldwide has entered a prolonged depression.

Calero encouraged the students and others to write letters of protest to the INS,

demanding deportation proceedings against him be dropped, and to help get out the fact sheets on the case. Materials in English, Spanish, French, and Arabic were available at the meeting. “The first endorsement in Arabic just arrived at the defense committee office in New York from Basra, Iraq,” Calero noted. That spurred Ferda Dönmez, a student from Turkey and a leader of SLAP, to enthusiastically volunteer to work on the Turkish translation of the defense committee materials.

## Róger Calero defense campaign tour

The Róger Calero Defense Committee is organizing a speaking tour for Calero in cities around the country. Requests for tour dates can be made to the committee at the address below. **Visit the web site at: [www.calerodefense.org](http://www.calerodefense.org)**

For more information or to send a contribution: Róger Calero Defense Committee, c/o PRDF, Box 761, Church St. Station, New York, NY 10007; phone/fax, (212) 563-0585.

• **New!** Send messages demanding exclusion moves against Calero be dropped to: **Demetrios Georgakopolous, Director, Bureau of Customs and Immigration Enforcement.** Fax messages to: **(973) 645-3074;** or mail to:

**970 Broad St., Newark, NJ 07102.**

Copies should be sent to the Róger Calero Defense Committee.

• Sign and distribute petitions demanding the INS drop the exclusion of Calero. A brochure and petition are available from the defense committee (e-mail: [calerodefense@yahoo.com](mailto:calerodefense@yahoo.com)).

• Funds are needed to meet legal and other expenses. The goal is to raise more than \$50,000. Contributions are tax-deductible.

## Tyson meat packers reach out for solidarity

**Continued from front page**

reducing vacations, eliminating two paid holidays for new hires; taking away the right to severance pay if the plant closes; and ending the profit-sharing program.

Scott Howard, who has worked there for 19 years, told the crowd, “Now is our time...for the people who do the work to be treated fairly, not just make the rich,

richer.”

“We had contracts going up and up until 1984,” said Arnold Brawders, who described himself as a former employee and 39-year union member. “That year we took a hit of \$2 an hour, which they said was to keep them competitive.”

“The company has been bought out seven times since I started working there,”

Allan Vogel stated after the rally. He now has 22 years in the plant. “There has never been a strike. We accepted a bad contract then [in 1984], but never again.”

Unionists staff picket lines 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Honking horns, supporters joining the picket lines, and the numerous donations of food and money have shown the widespread support for the strike in this region.

**‘Truth squads’**

The strikers are not stopping there. “Truth Squads” of 15–20 strikers each have hit the road to explain their fight, visiting other Tyson-owned meatpacking plants, leafleting, and collecting donations at the plant gates. Only three days after the March 16 rally, a UFCW member staffing the strike headquarters, Shannon Fitzpatrick, said in a telephone interview that squads were out in Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota, and Nebraska. “And we’re going to expand from there,” promised Local 538 business agent Mike Rice at the rally.

The union is also inviting supporters to another solidarity rally set for Saturday, March 29, 1:30 p.m. in front of the plant.

The broadest solidarity will be necessary to counter the company’s active recruitment of more strikebreakers to cross the picket line starting March 31.

UFCW official T.J. Lauritsen reported that in mid-March Tyson sent the 100 workers they laid off at their Culinary Foods plant in Chicago fliers in English, Spanish, and Chinese advertising work available at \$10 an hour along with continuation of health-care insurance at the Jefferson facility. The offer to scab on the strike included transportation and motel rooms. The flier noted that a strike by UFCW Local 538 is occurring at the plant.

This confirmed the feeling several strikers expressed that the company is not planning to shut down this modern, efficient plant, but is not interested in paying the workers the wages and benefits they have fought for and won, either.

Tyson Foods is a Fortune 500 corporation that’s been in business for 68 years. The onset of capitalist depression has affected the company’s profit margins, making investors nervous. Tyson’s stock fell from \$15.71 in July to \$7.20 per share March 18.

Tyson is using this to justify its drive to cut both wages paid to workers and prices paid to farmers for their livestock.

The unionists’ determination to beat back these attacks was reflected in the flier for the March 16 rally. “Tyson Foods workers on strike in the fight of their lives,” it said. “Failure is not an option.”

## Protesters demand bail for Sami Al-Arian

**BY KARL BUTTS**

TAMPA, Florida—In a picket line marked by continuous defiant chanting, about 50 family members and supporters of Sami Al-Arian, Hatem Naji Fariz, Sameeh Hammoudeh, and Ghassan Zayed Ballut marched in front of the federal courthouse here March 20. It was the first day of a hearing to determine if they will be released on bail following their arrest and indictment February 20 on phony charges of supporting “terrorism.”

Al-Arian, a professor at the University of South Florida (USF), and his co-defendants are outspoken defenders of the Palestinian national liberation struggle. The four were arrested on a 50-count federal indictment. Many of the 50 are “conspiracy” charges announced at a high-profile press conference by U.S. attorney general John Ashcroft a month earlier.

Chants included, “Free Al-Arian,” “Long live Palestine,” and “Zionism must go.” The majority of the signs demanded freedom for Al-Arian while others said: “Palestinians Have the Right to Resist” or “Stop the Attacks on Arab People.” The court room could only accommodate a limited number of reporters preselected from a pool. Even some close members of the defendants’ families were unable to enter.

Five counter-demonstrators chanted “USA” and carried American flags and signs against Al-Arian getting bail. They also held pro-war posters. One protester in particular got right in the pickets’ face with provocative taunts like, “Israel yes, Palestine no,” while a dozen cops looked on. Some of the young Arab-American protesters would occasionally confront this rightist with the truth. No one appeared intimidated by the handful of right-wingers.

John Sabin, a worker who came from Clearwater with his family to join the picket, said that it’s time to “speak now or forever hold your peace” over what he described as the declining state of civil rights in this country. In regards to Al-Arian’s indictment, Sabin noted with sarcasm, “He’s guilty of supporting Palestine.”

“I don’t think [Al-Arian] should be in jail, because he is innocent,” said USF student Layelle Saab. “He’s not a threat, not a flight risk, and should be given bail.” Referring to the war on Iraq, Saab said, “My parents have always taught me to speak out but with the war now I feel this is not a free country, our civil liberties are going down, and Congress is doing nothing.”

Mustafa Odeh, a student at the Islamic Academy of Florida, stated, “The reason Sami was arrested was that he is very political. The government is afraid people will listen to him. He always speaks of peace.”

According to a pool reporter allowed into the hearing, three federal prosecutors took the better part of two hours going through the indictment to make the case that the four defendants were a threat to the community and a flight risk and therefore should not be given bail. Walter Furr, the lead prosecutor, maintained the characterization of Al-Arian in the charges as a secret top leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which is on a list of organizations Washington has deemed “terrorist.” “For a time,” Furr stated, Al-Arian “was as powerful as any member of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad on the planet.” Furr made unsubstantiated statements that Al-Arian helped finance suicide bombings and gloated when people were killed.



Militant/Karl Butts

**Rally backing Sami Al-Arian, a professor at University of South Florida, and three other defenders of Palestinian rights facing “terrorism” charges, at their March 20 bail hearing in Tampa.**

According to an article in the March 21 *Tampa Tribune*, defense lawyers countered that the evidence in the indictment didn’t prove their clients committed any crimes.

The prosecutor’s opening arguments were followed by the character witness phase of the bail hearing, starting with those called in on behalf of Sameeh Hammoudeh. All, except Ballut, finished their hearings by the end of the day.

The *Tribune* said that defense lawyers told the court that community members are willing to put up millions of dollars in property equity to secure their client’s release, including the facilities of the Islamic Academy of Florida.



# Germany's economy is in steep decline

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Germany's economy—the largest in Europe and third behind the United States and Japan on a world scale—is in a steep decline. Growth of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was at zero for the last three months of 2002 and only 0.2 percent for the year, the worst performance since a 1993 decline of 1.3 percent. According to government statistics, 4.7 million people, or more than 11 percent of the workforce, are unemployed.

Under these conditions, German chancellor Gerhard Schröder has proposed a “labor reform plan,” including cuts in social benefits and curtailment of labor rights. Schröder heads a coalition government of his Social Democratic Party and the Greens. Representatives of the country's numerically strong unions immediately rejected the proposals.

Germany is the “sick man of the world, the sick man of Europe,” lamented one business executive in the February 17 *Business Week*. GDP growth of an average 1.3 percent a year over the past decade is “the lowest rate in Europe and not much better than Japan's rate of 1 percent,” the magazine stated.

These developments confirm the relative weakening of the German bourgeoisie both economically and politically in capitalist Europe, especially vis-à-vis its imperialist rival in France. This was one of the major shifts in world politics over the last decade, set off by reunification with the German Democratic Republic in 1990.

The comparison with Japan, whose banks are staggering toward collapse under the weight of billions of dollars in uncollectable loans, was not unusual. While Berlin's stagnation is not worse than Tokyo's, it has greater immediate weight, given Germany's central position within Europe and trade with other countries on the continent.

Government statistics show that in 2001 more than 55 percent of German exports went to nations in the European Union, while imports from those countries amounted to 52 percent. By comparison, exports to the United States were 10 percent and imports 8 percent of the total.

The German economy is 40 percent larger than that of either France or the United Kingdom, the next two strongest imperialist powers in Europe.

The downward slide shows up more in specific sectors of the capitalist economy. Once home to the world's biggest pharmaceutical manufacturers, Germany now has no such company in the global top 15. “In the 1980s, Frankfurt's elegant banks stood as bastions of stability,” noted *Business Week*. “Now, Frankfurt's future as a major financial center is in doubt.”

Capitalist politicians and commentators in the big-business press in the United States and Europe pin the blame for the German crisis on the country's social security system and conditions of labor. Any gains for working people registered in Germany's labor and other laws were won through struggles by the labor movement in the decades after World War II. Laid-off workers, for example, are supposed to receive 60 to 70 percent of their wages for two-and-a-half years after losing their jobs, and a shade above 50 percent after that. Schröder himself has derided such benefits as exemplifying Germany as a “nanny state.”

Germany needs “root and branch” change, said an editorial in the March 17 *Investor's Business Daily*, which is based in New York. “Companies need some relief, especially from Germany's powerful unions,” it continued. “Their biggest beef: By law, any deal between the employers and unions is imposed on all companies—whether they can afford it or not. It's been an economic disaster.”

In contrast to “the more dynamic” economies of Britain, Spain, and Central Europe, stated *Business Week*, “Germany—with France not far behind—will constitute Europe's unchanging core, where taxes remain stiflingly high, growth is glacially slow, and labor rigidities kill chances to dent unemployment.”

## Massive transfers to the East

The article claimed that the “core” of the “German disease” is the “job-protec-



**Workers in IG Bau construction union walk off job in June 2002 in a strike of 32,000. They forced the bosses to agree to a wage increase and a raise in the minimum wage in eastern Germany. Union actions have frequently demanded measures to overcome the disparity in living standards between east and west. Berlin's attempt to swallow workers state in the east is at center of German imperialism's troubles.**

tion law [which] makes any employer pay through the nose for laying off workers.”

At the same time, *Business Week* acknowledged another factor for Berlin's economic woes that receives scant attention in the media—the huge drain caused by the attempt to integrate the socialized economy of the East. “Since 1990,” the article stated, “reunification has cost Germany an estimated \$700 billion and still devours 4% of GDP a year.”

The lion's share of these funds has gone to unemployment benefits and other social programs, not capital investment. The German government has shut down much industry in the east. Official unemployment there topped 20 percent in 1998, more than double the national level of the day. Joblessness in eastern Germany is actually much higher if low-paying government make-work programs are not counted.

Referring to these transfers—made to avert a social explosion in the east as working people have continued to demand equalization of living and working conditions east to west—Germany's finance minister Hans Eichel said, “From an economic point of view, there are naturally things we shouldn't have done. You can't take an economy that has been cut off from the world 40 years and make it competitive overnight.

“It will take until 2020 to conclude the process of reuniting Germany,” Eichel added, trying to be optimistic.

## Schröder's 'labor reform plan'

Schröder presented his proposals in a televised address to parliament March 14. “Today the reform and the renewal of the social welfare state has become unavoidable,” he said. The labor reform law was based on proposals drawn up by a commission led by Peter Hartz, an executive at Volkswagen, the giant auto company. In August Schröder hailed the commission's blueprint—which, among other measures,

aimed to expand the use of temporary workers—as the “greatest labor-market reform” since World War II.

In his March package, the chancellor said that his government would draft legislation to weaken the job protection law. In addition, he said, local government benefits to the “long-term unemployed” would be cut.

Schröder “surpassed expectations,” said an article in the March 15 *Financial Times*, “by slashing the duration of benefits for the unemployed” from today's maximum of 32 months to no more than 12–18 months.

The package also included the threats of cuts to government spending on social welfare, health care, and retirement pensions. In his previous term in office, Schröder had already carried out a round of pension cuts.

Union officials immediately rejected the proposals. Frank Bsirske, the head of the Verdi union, said that the coalition government's policies were “shifting wealth from bottom to top.” The union, Germany's largest, represents more than 3 million public employees and other workers in the service industry—from transportation workers to kindergarten teachers—tens of thousands of whom struck for higher wages last year. The strike coincided with rolling actions by hundreds of thousands of construction workers.

“What was presented in social and labor market policy today was not socially well balanced,” said Michael Sommer, the head of the German Federation of Unions.

For their part, a number of spokespeople for the capitalist class said the proposals did not go far enough. Hans-Olaf Henkel, the vice president of the German Federation of Industry, for example, compared it to a “drop of water on a hot stone.”

The *Investor's Business Daily* editors complained that Schröder had “watered down plans to ease firing rules under union

pressure and steered clear of a frontal attack on the industry-wide system of setting wages.”

Last year Schröder proposed a raft of tax increases, after the government admitted that its budget for 2003 would have to be revised downward by \$13.6 billion. The chancellor blamed spending on unemployment and social security, along with lower than expected tax revenues. The changes, which included a 15 percent capital gains tax, were thrown out by the parliament.

## German and French budget deficits

For the second year in a row, the governments of both Germany and France are expected to record budget deficits that exceed the 3 percent limit established as a rule for membership in the European monetary union. It was Berlin and Paris that had browbeaten weaker states in the EU to cut social programs and make other changes to meet this limit before the onset of the euro.

A European Commission official announced March 20 that the current U.S.-led assault on Iraq might provide the two dominant continental powers with a way out. EU monetary affairs commissioner Pedro Solbes said that if Paris and Berlin help finance the occupation regime that would follow a successful war of conquest, they could invoke a commission rule that would allow them to exceed the limit on the grounds of “exceptional circumstances.”

“Even Germany will probably help finance the rebuilding after the war, so they could invoke this clause,” said economist Hans-Werner Sinn. While Berlin joined Paris in opposing the current Anglo-American assault on Iraq, it has reaffirmed that U.S. warplanes can use German skies. Furthermore, on the eve of war the government expelled four Iraqi diplomats.

Schröder rebuffed calls by the opposition parties to vote on his decision to keep German troops in Kuwait—specially trained in the detection of nuclear and chemical contamination—and to allow troops to join NATO reconnaissance flights over Turkey.

## 'Time is short'

The March 17 *Financial Times* sounded a note of alarm in expressing sympathy with the German ruling class's financial plight, and support for Schröder's proposed attacks on the social wage and worker's rights.

“The German economy is in a dismal state,” the paper observed. “Forecasts of economic growth this year are barely above zero, deflation is a real risk, and unemployment is at a five-year high.”

The European limit on the deficit, said the *Times*, is “inappropriate for the eurozone's largest economy.... Against this backdrop, the package of reform measures announced by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder represents a modest effort to loosen Germany's economic rigidities....

“Even if he prevails the measures will take time to make any difference. The DAX 30 [stock market] index has fallen by 53 percent over the past 15 months, a decline exceeded only by the Argentine bourse. Time is short.”

# UK gov't tries to beat back firefighters union

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON—John Prescott, the deputy prime minister in the Labour government, said March 20 that he will move to impose a settlement on the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in its long-running dispute with the Local Government Association (LGA).

Since last November more than 55,000 firefighters have taken part in a series of one- and two-day strikes to demand a substantial wage raise and oppose the employers' plans to institute large-scale layoffs and cut back fire fighting services. On each occasion the government has mobilized around 19,000 army, navy, and air force strikebreakers to run their own fleet of fire fighting trucks.

Prescott told the House of Commons that he would sponsor a bill giving him the power to set wages and conditions. Settlement of the dispute was pressing, he said, because of the U.S.-UK assault on Iraq and

what he called the “heightened threat of terrorism.” Having 19,000 soldiers “tied down” after military action had begun would be “extraordinary and unacceptable,” he added.

The Conservative Party's deputy leader, David Davis, said that the danger of strike action was “starker” now than before. The legislation should include the power to ban further strikes, he said.

Several days earlier the Conservative defense spokesperson, Bernard Jenkin, commenting on the FBU announcement that another strike would go ahead on March 20, accused the FBU of acting like “Saddam's friends.”

Gen. Michael Jackson, the head of the British army, said in a March 17 television interview, “I hope [the dispute] gets settled before the next few weeks because that would relieve the army of a very considerable burden.” The *Guardian* reported that a naval petty officer serving in the Gulf

“was quoted...accusing the firefighters of ‘betraying their country’ by threatening to strike.”

In the face of this pressure, the union executive voted 12–6 to accept a new offer from the employers and call off the action.

The deal provided for a 16 percent wage increase over three years, tied to cuts and changes in working practices. Union leader Andy Gilchrist said that the offer was “the best available in the current political situation,” reported the BBC.

However, the following day the union's 500-member delegate conference meeting in Brighton, threw out the agreement. Tennyson Turney of the Cambridgeshire FBU told reporters, “Nothing has changed from the original offer.”

The proposed deal will now be discussed by firefighters across the country over the next two weeks, and will be submitted to another national delegate conference.



# U.S.-led forces unleash massive invasion

**Continued from front page**

control of the Mideast and its resources. Washington's goal is to conquer Iraq and establish a protectorate under U.S. military rule as part of its long-term efforts to establish its supremacy in the Mideast at the expense of its rivals. To camouflage these predatory aims, the imperialist assault has been named "Operation Iraqi Freedom."

For its part, Paris seeks to protect its foothold in the oil-rich region, where it has profited from lucrative commercial relations with the Iraqi government.

After months of building up an invasion force of more than a quarter-million troops in the Arab-Persian Gulf, while escalating a campaign of bombing Iraq's defense and communications facilities in the north and south, Washington and London unleashed their military offensive in the early hours of March 20. They did so in the name of a "coalition of the willing," nearly 50 governments backing the military assault. Fifteen of these governments, however, have preferred to remain anonymous, their endorsement influenced by none-too-subtle pressures from their U.S. "partner."

The U.S. government unceremoniously dismissed the "unwilling," particularly the imperialist powers in Paris and Berlin. To guarantee their place in the re-carving up of the Mideast, those governments had called for extending United Nations "arms inspections" in order to "disarm" Iraq.

Despite the constant media references to "coalition troops," the actual combat force is made up of 250,000 soldiers from the United States, 45,000 from the United Kingdom, and 2,000 from Australia.

The attack began with cruise missile aimed at killing the top Iraqi leadership in Baghdad. Dozens of government buildings and strategic facilities in the country's capital were reduced to rubble. U.S. officials initially claimed Iraqi president Saddam Hussein had been killed or seriously wounded in the bombing.

This move was calculated to deal a decisive blow to demoralize the cadres of the ruling Baathist party and Iraqi officer corps by demonstrating that the central government was isolated and vulnerable, thus leading to the collapse of the resistance. U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced March 21 that secret surrender talks were under way with Iraqi military commanders.

On the second day, the imperialist forces launched what they called a "shock and awe" campaign of intense round-the-clock bombing and shelling, aimed at forcing Iraq's forces into an early capitulation. Cruise missiles have rained down on Iraqi cities day and night; as of March 25, according to Pentagon spokespeople, 2,000

bombs and missiles have been launched, concentrated on Baghdad. Other major cities hit include Kirkuk and Mosul, two oil-producing centers in the north, and Nasiriyah and Basra in the south.

## Working people killed, wounded

U.S. officials have sought to portray the bombing campaign as a model of precision tailored to minimize civilian casualties. The big-business correspondents "embedded" with the imperialist forces have been careful to downplay the scope of the deaths and injuries among the Iraqi population. Some initial reports, however, have provided a glimpse of the devastation inflicted on working people by the "precision bombing." Hundreds have been reported killed or wounded in Baghdad, and the toll continues to rise.

Saman Atef, a resident of a working-class neighborhood in north Baghdad, told *Los Angeles Times* reporter John Daniszewski that he was home on the morning of March 24 when bombs hit and three of his neighbors' houses exploded in a rain of bricks, glass, and dust, killing four people and injuring 23. "This is not the first time that they have targeted civilian buildings," he said. "They would like to destroy the civilian population."

Atef added, "We are not frightened by the bombing—we are motivated to be stronger."

Thamur Skeikel, 53, an oil ministry employee, had returned from work to find his house no longer standing and his sister and two young nephews killed. "Bush is cursed," he said. "They want to destroy the people." The *Times* reporter noted that the residents of the neighborhood "counted one more reason to hate the United States."

At nearby Al Nouman hospital, where doctors were treating survivors, Aqeel Khalil, 27, said, "There is no military site in my house, and there is no gun in my house." Khalil's wife had been killed in the assault.

Syrians reacted with outrage March 24 when U.S. and British planes accidentally bombed a bus in western Iraq full of Syrian workers returning home from their jobs across the border. Five people were killed and 15 wounded.

Thousands of protesters chanted, "Murder, murder," and "Stop the aggression" outside the British and U.S. embassies in Damascus, which have been closed until further notice.

The imperialist forces launched a ground invasion of southern Iraq from bases in neighboring Kuwait in step with the bombing campaign. Advancing rapidly and reportedly encountering little resistance in the first few days, they took much of the south, seizing the prized oil wells.

British-led forces have carried out a siege of the southern port city of Basra, subjecting it to savage bombardment. They have initially avoided entering the city, Iraq's second-largest, to minimize U.S. and British dead and wounded. Iraqi casualties are reported to be high. Al-Jazeera, the Qatar-based TV news network, reported that 50 people were killed March 22 after being bombed by a U.S. fighter jet. Hospital workers told the station that entire families had been killed.

With the water supply and electricity cut off in the city of 1.5 million people, United Nations officials have warned of a growing risk of disease, particularly among children. Iraqi trade minister Mohamed Mahdi Saleh stated in a March 25 news conference that U.S. forces had seized ships carrying humanitarian relief in the port of Umm Qasr, blocking supplies to Basra.

These developments stand in sharp contrast to statements by U.S. government officials that U.S. soldiers



**Above: Residents of a Baghdad neighborhood pick through the rubble of their homes in the aftermath of U.S. and British bombing. Left: Two members of a U.S. helicopter crew captured during invasion of Iraq. Images of POWs are being used to rally support for Washington's war effort.**



are bringing "humanitarian aid" to Iraqis.

To the extent that the U.S. and British bombers have spared Baghdad's communications networks and other vital infrastructure, it is due to other than humanitarian interests. As *New York Times* reporter Eric Schmitt noted March 24, they want to avoid "destroying the same broadcast system that U.S.-led forces would use soon after they seize Baghdad to communicate quickly with the Iraqi people." Washington needs that as part of imposing a new occupation regime.

In the initial stage of the imperialist advance into southern Iraq, U.S. and British officials reported that substantial numbers of Iraqi soldiers were surrendering. The invading forces have so far avoided entering major cities in the south, bombing and besieging them while the major military forces head toward Baghdad, where they expect the outcome of the war will be settled.

## Resistance stiffens

The U.S. and British forces met stiff resistance at several key points, however, including Basra and Nasiriyah. "Outside Basra, British troops pulled back after they met ferocious resistance when they tried to enter the city where the U.S. and Britain had predicted their forces would be welcomed as liberators," said the online news service islam.net, citing reporters from the British newspaper *The Independent*.

As of March 24, Pentagon officials reported 20 U.S. troops killed and 14 captured or missing. Ten Marines were killed and more than 50 were wounded as U.S. forces began to battle their way into Nasiriyah that day.

British casualties so far total 19 dead or missing. They include two Royal Air Force pilots who were killed when their Tornado fighter jet was accidentally shot down by a U.S. Patriot missile. British officials have sought to downplay the "friendly fire" incident.

At a U.S. military command center in Kuwait, a soldier in the 101st Airborne Division's 326th Engineer Battalion was arrested and accused of killing a soldier and wounding 15 others by rolling grenades into an officer's tent. The U.S. capitalist media has highlighted the fact that Sgt. Hasan Akbar, 31, is Muslim and that he could face the death penalty.

The *New York Post*, for example, ran a screaming headline, "'Traitor' GI a Mus-

lim loner: May get death in tent slay," fueling the "homeland defense" campaign by the U.S. rulers to use military tribunals, curtail constitutional rights, and step up the use of the death penalty against working people.

With the first reports of U.S. casualties, the U.S. rulers have begun to crank up a patriotic, pro-war campaign by depicting Iraqi soldiers as subhuman and war criminals. They have denounced Iraq for showing on television five captured U.S. soldiers and the bodies of several who were killed in the fighting near Nasiriyah. Pentagon officials have alleged that three of the soldiers had been "executed." The *Post* headline was "Ghouls parade our prisoners: Vile video shows executed GIs and terrified survivors."

U.S. president George Bush declared March 23 that Iraqi officials could be tried as "war criminals" for allegedly mistreating U.S. or British prisoners of war. He claimed that the U.S. forces were treating the Iraqi prisoners "humanely." Defense Secretary Rumsfeld asserted that the TV broadcast of the U.S. soldiers violated the Geneva Convention governing the treatment of POWs.

U.S. officials demanded that the U.S. media not carry pictures provided by Al-Jazeera showing the dead and captured troops. Most of the big-business media readily complied with the censorship order, although they have shown pictures of Iraqi POWs. One alternative online news service, YellowTimes.org, which had posted some of these photos, was temporarily shut down by its hosting provider for publishing "inappropriate graphic material."

U.S. newspapers and TV stations have begun portraying relatives of the captured troops and soldiers on the war front responding angrily to the showing of the U.S. POWs. Meanwhile, pro-war "Support our troops" rallies have been organized in several cities, from a demonstration of 1,000 in New York's Times Square to nearly 17,000 in St. Paul, Minnesota.

From the beginning of the invasion of Iraq, politicians from both the Democratic and Republican parties have closed ranks to support the U.S.-led war. As U.S. missiles and bombs have devastated Baghdad, Nancy Pelosi and Thomas Daschle, the Democratic leaders in the House of Representatives and Senate, respectively, used the Democratic weekly radio address to express "support for our commander in chief," as Daschle put it. The two houses of Congress passed resolutions backing the assault on Iraq.

With the imperialist armies marching toward Baghdad, U.S. and British warplanes stepped up their savage bombing campaign in northern Iraq. The bombardment of Kirkuk "effectively signaled the opening of a northern front against Baghdad," reported the Australian *Herald Sun*, noting that "so far the only U.S. troops in this area are believed to be special forces

**Continued on page 10**



**Protest in response to U.S.-led assault on Iraq outside a mosque in Cairo, Egypt.**



# U.S. hostility to Cuba was at root of ‘missile’ crisis

## Carlos Lechuga speaks at book launching

The following are the remarks of Carlos Lechuga at a February 3 meeting in Havana that celebrated the publication of *October 1962: The ‘Missile’ Crisis as Seen from Cuba*, by Tomás Díez Acosta. New York-based Pathfinder Press published an English-language edition of the book on the 40th anniversary of the October 1962 events (see ad below). The Cuban publisher Editora Política released a Spanish-language edition, which quickly sold out and is being reprinted.

Lechuga served as Cuba’s ambassador to the United Nations during the U.S. government-instigated “missile crisis” 40 years ago (see box below).

Also speaking on February 3 were Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder, and Iraida Aguirrechu, current affairs editor of Editora Política, who chaired the event. Coverage of the meeting, which drew nearly 100 people, appeared in the March 10 *Militant*.

The event, which was part of the annual Havana International Book Fair, also launched the new title *Marianas in Combat: Teté Puebla and the Mariana Grajales Platoon in Cuba’s Revolutionary War*, published by Pathfinder in English and Spanish. The translation and subheadings are by the *Militant*.



### BY CARLOS LECHUGA

Tomás Díez Acosta, author of the book we’re presenting today, is a diligent researcher of well-earned merit, as well as a thoroughgoing analyst of the most important and dangerous crisis of the Cold War period: the October Crisis. During the crisis Tomás Díez wasn’t in Moscow or in Washington, but in a military unit in Cuba, where he served as a political instructor. That vantage point gave him a profound and multifaceted view of this important historical event.

This youthful experience, combined with his extensive academic and historical investigations, gives this work great value, because it enables him to analyze the crisis from the Cuban point of view. Such an analysis is of particular interest for knowing what actually happened, without distortions or doctoring.

The book contains a wealth of new in-

formation extracted from the Cuban archives, as well as from interviews with direct participants in those events. He also cites declassified U.S. documents that clarify many aspects of the conflict.

For a long time—and still today—attempts have been made to distort the true cause of that dramatic turning point, which, simply put, was the U.S. policy of aggression against Cuba going back to the first days of the revolution. That policy developed along two well-defined paths. One, the clandestine approach, was carried out through the Central Intelligence Agency. The other path involved the Organization of American States as an instrument to politically isolate Cuba and thus facilitate a military attack, which had already been prepared when the crisis arose.

### Washington seeks to isolate Cuba

On a hemispheric level, Washington resorted to every means to make the Latin American governments bend to their wishes with the aim of punishing Cuba. Eight months after the revolutionary triumph, a meeting was held of foreign ministers. Such meetings had been held four times in 20 years. But after January 1, 1959, in the course of just 24 months, there were four of them, all with the aim of destroying the revolution. At the last one [in January 1962], the Americans obtained the votes necessary to expel Cuba from the OAS.

This was an illegal violation of the regional organization’s charter, which did not provide for expelling any member. It also violated the United Nations Charter, which supersedes the OAS charter and does not discriminate against any country on the basis of its socioeconomic system. In fact, the OAS also played an important role in the October Crisis, inasmuch as its Council aided Washington by hurriedly adopting a resolution endorsing a naval blockade of the island. This decision was made at the request of the U.S. State Department, and its legality was also highly questionable.

At the time Cuba was expelled from the OAS, the country was already reinforcing its military capacity, as the book details. It was impossible to keep Washington’s intentions hidden.

The subversive activities, which had



Militant/Jonathan Silverman

Carlos Lechuga, center, at launching of *October 1962: The ‘Missile’ Crisis as Seen From Cuba* by Tomás Díez Acosta, seated to the right, at 2003 Havana International Book Fair. Lechuga was Cuba’s ambassador to the UN during the events of October 1962. At left, Iraida Aguirrechu of Editora Política, who co-edited the Cuban edition.

never stopped, were stepped up and organized better, under the watchful eye of the highest authorities in Washington. The plans for sabotage and the assassination of leaders, Fidel Castro in particular, did not stop. The book contains an account of those facts, as well as the contingency plans to invade Cuba.

[Soviet premier Nikita] Khrushchev’s idea of proposing to Cuba the installation of nuclear missiles is told in detail in Tomás Díez’s book. The idea was prompted by the threat to the security of his country by the installation of U.S. “Jupiter” missiles in Turkey and Italy, and by the imminent danger of an attack on Cuba. Robert McNamara, Kennedy’s secretary of defense, has revealed that, during the time of the October 1962 crisis, the United States possessed 5,000 nuclear missiles while the Soviet Union had 300. That meant a 17 to 1 ratio, in addition to a large disparity as regards bombers and other strategic weapons.

It’s interesting to read in the book about all the military aspects of the operation involving the installation of the missiles, the errors committed by the Soviet leadership, and Cuba’s clarity and foresight throughout the entire process. The book also takes up the main reason why Cuba accepted the strategic weapons as well as the evolution of the diplomatic negotiations.

We get a clear view of the gigantic effort involved in preparing all the troops and military equipment in the USSR, transferring them to Cuba, and installing them in our territory. The troops and military equipment docked in seven ports and it took 185 sea journeys to transport them. The details of the operation in this book read like scenes of a great work of drama, with the added interest that everything was taking place amid a climate of dangerous confrontation on a world scale. We likewise learn of the locations on the island where the different types of troops and missile systems were placed, as well as the reasons they could be discovered by U.S. planes. It should be said, however, that despite all its efforts, the enemy’s intelligence never found out the number of Soviet troops that were in Cuba.

The book faithfully reflects the political and diplomatic side of the crisis, which played a noteworthy role. It recounts the positions of Havana, Washington, and Moscow in all their various nuances.

The United Nations attempted to be the center of the negotiations. Many countries expected that as soon as the conflict was over and war averted, the Security Council would meet and come up with a long-term agreement to solve the differences between Cuba and the United States, thus ending the tensions in the Caribbean and eliminating a point of friction that endangered world peace. Washington refused to consider the question in that form, and rejected Cuba’s participation in its negotiations with the Soviets, pushing aside in fact the conciliatory efforts by the United Nations secretary-general.

In the end, the Security Council was unable to meet despite the fact that the cri-

sis was on its agenda. The Soviets and the Americans came to an agreement and sent a note to the UN’s highest body saying that no discussion on this point was necessary since the crisis had already been resolved. Cuba sent another note, but with the opposite conclusion. The Cubans and Soviets had prepared an agreement that reflected the positions of the three countries, to be presented to the Council. But Washington did not agree to it.

### U.S. gov’t refuses to end aggression

The discussions were very tense. The Cuban leadership found out about the Soviet agreement to remove the missiles in Cuba through a broadcast over Radio Moscow. What happened was that Kennedy made continual demands on the Soviets that were always accepted without much debate. Kennedy’s promise not to invade Cuba, which Khrushchev agreed to even though he had no guarantees, was rejected by Cuba. The fact that Washington refused to agree to end the economic war against Cuba, discontinue subversive activities and acts of piracy, and stop violating our territorial air space and waters demonstrated that there was absolutely no basis to such an offer. Nor did they accept the additional guarantee demanded by Cuba: the withdrawal of the Guantánamo naval base. None of these conditions—acceptance of which would have given Kennedy’s promise a solid foundation—was agreed to by Washington. As it says in the book, Cuba already had a long and bitter experience with Washington’s lack of sincerity.

The book reviews all aspects of the crisis, presenting the viewpoints of the three parties to the conflict. In addition the book contains an extensive section of Cuban documents of great historical value.

One of the propaganda weapons that the United States utilized very effectively was the fact that the missiles were installed in our territory in a clandestine way, covertly, and not as the result of a legitimate mili-

Continued on Page 14

## What was Oct. 1962 ‘missile’ crisis?

In October 1962, in what is widely known as the Cuban Missile Crisis, Washington pushed the world to the brink of nuclear war. The events brought to a head the drive by the U.S. rulers to launch a direct invasion of Cuba and overthrow the revolutionary government there.

On Jan. 1, 1959, the Cuban workers and farmers had overthrown a U.S.-backed dictatorship and begun a deep-going revolution. From that point on, Washington took increasingly aggressive actions to try to undermine and overthrow the new revolutionary power. In April 1961, Cuba’s revolutionary militias and armed forces crushed a U.S.-organized mercenary invasion at the Bay of Pigs. In subsequent months, the Kennedy administration launched “Operation Mongoose” and other campaigns of counterrevolutionary terror and sabotage.

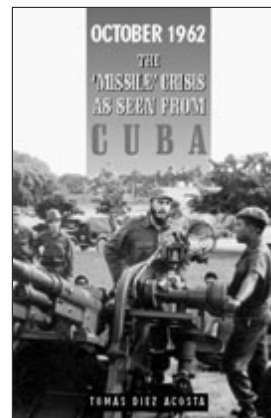
In the spring and summer of 1962, in face of escalating preparations by Washington for a full-scale invasion of Cuba, the revolutionary government signed a mutual defense pact with the Soviet Union, including the deployment of

Soviet missiles on the island. In October of that year U.S. president John F. Kennedy demanded removal of the Soviet nuclear missiles from Cuba. Washington imposed a naval blockade of Cuba, stepped up preparations for an armed assault, and placed its armed forces on nuclear alert.

In face of the mobilization of Cuban workers and farmers to defend their national sovereignty and revolutionary gains, the U.S. government backed off its invasion plans. Following an exchange of communications between Washington and Moscow, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev, without consulting Havana, publicly announced his decision to remove the missiles on October 28.

A few days after the Soviet announcement, the U.S. government demanded that Cuba accept “inspectors” to “verify” the removal of the missiles. UN secretary-general U Thant went to Cuba to try to persuade Havana to accept such a group of “inspectors.” The revolutionary government rejected this demand as a blatant violation of Cuba’s national sovereignty.

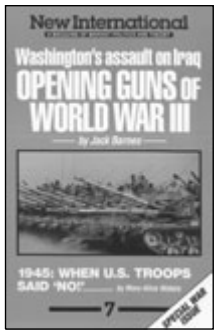
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*By Jack Barnes*

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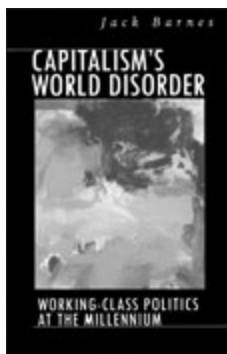
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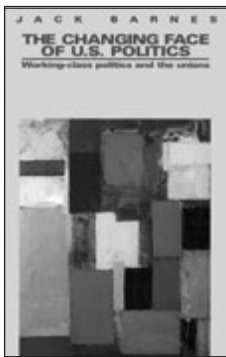
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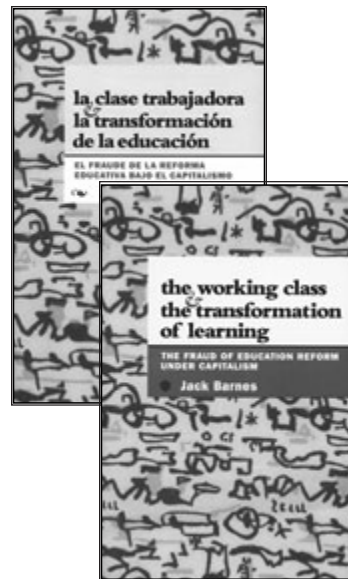
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## U.S.-led forces unleash massive invasion

**Continued from page 8**

flown into the Kurdish-held airfields." Since the 1991 Gulf War, Washington and London have imposed a "no-fly zone" in northern Iraq, a region where the Kurdish oppressed nationality is the majority.

The Turkish regime, which has systematically suppressed the Kurdish minority in Turkey, has moved troops southward with the intention of entering northern Iraq to quash any attempt by Kurds on either side of the border to advance the fight for their national rights.

On March 23 Bush warned the government in Ankara to keep out of Iraq, concerned that Turkey's move would disrupt Washington's efforts to take northern Iraq as part of its occupation of the entire country. The leaders of the main Kurdish organization in Iraq have been collaborating with Washington's campaign against the government of Saddam Hussein.

Tensions have sharpened between Washington and Ankara over Washington's demand to use Turkey as a base for a U.S. invasion of Iraq. After the Turkish parliament reversed itself and decided to allow U.S. forces to use Turkish airspace, though not its territory, Washington dismissed the gesture as inadequate and announced that it was suspending U.S. economic "aid" to that crisis-ridden country. On March 24, U.S. authorities issued "an apology" to Ankara after U.S. missiles landed in an unpopulated area of Turkey near the Iraqi border.

It's now clear that a Turkish entry into northern Iraq would pose the possibility of a military clash between Washington and Ankara—two NATO members.

The conflict between the U.S. and British governments and French imperialism also continued to sharpen. French president Jacques Chirac declared March 21 that the United Nations must be at the center of the post-invasion "reconstruction" of Iraq. French officials "fear that the United States will now dominate the process of reconstruction of Iraq," the *Toronto Star* reported.

**Paris rebuffs Washington**

Paris had adamantly refused to shut down its embassy in Baghdad, after Washington had demanded that all governments cut off diplomatic relations and expel Iraqi diplomats as Bush issued an ultimatum to the Iraqi regime. The French embassy did close its gates March 20, as U.S. missiles began raining on Baghdad. Interviewed on a CBSTV program four days later, former CIA director James Woolsey laughed at a reporter's suggestion that Paris may give shelter to Saddam Hussein. "I don't even think the Chirac government, even in the aftermath of the last couple of months, would be willing to do that," he said.

Responding to Chirac's hint on sharing the spoils after the war, U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell said that Washington would "consult" with UN Security Council members but would move ahead with

its course of military occupation and takeover of Iraq's oil. "We're going to use the assets of the people of Iraq, especially their oil assets, to benefit their people," Powell told the media, leaving no doubt who "we" means. "I hope that France will want to be a partner in such an effort but that remains to be seen," he said.

The *International Herald Tribune* reported March 24 that the Bush administration has made the "decision to invite only U.S. corporations to bid on these contracts." On what basis are companies from other countries excluded? "In order to work in Iraq, you have to have a security clearance," declared Andrew Natsios, head of the U.S. Agency for International Development, "and the only companies that have security clearances are a certain number of American companies that have done this work before in war settings."

As the Anglo-American invasion proceeded, Paris belatedly announced that it would be willing to join it if the Iraqi regime used chemical weapons. The offer fell on deaf ears in Washington.

Instead, the U.S. rulers' anti-French campaign has intensified. The U.S. big-business media has been highlighting facts about what *New York Times* columnist William Safire has called "the French connection." In columns published March 13 and 20, Safire has written that French companies helped the Iraqi government obtain components of rocket fuel and other com-

pounds that Baghdad has used to manufacture chemical weapons.

"Is this component of fuel propelling 'unpleasant' weapons in Iraq now to be used against our troops?" he asked.

Washington has leveled similar accusations against Moscow. "The United States has credible evidence that Russian companies have provided assistance and prohibited hardware to the Iraqi regime, things such as night vision goggles, GPS jammers, and antitank guided missiles," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer told reporters March 24. "These actions are disturbing.... We've asked the Russian government that any such ongoing assistance cease immediately." Russian president Vladimir Putin immediately denied the allegations.

Meanwhile, the government of Iran reported March 23 that several U.S. rockets have fallen inside the country since the beginning of the U.S.-British assault on neighboring Iraq. An interior ministry spokesperson said that U.S. and British jets have violated Iranian airspace during their sorties in and out of Iraq.

Tehran did not argue that the missiles—one of which hit the oil center of Abadan, damaging a warehouse and injuring two people—were aimed at its territory. But the incident underscored the reality that the imperialist war on Iraq is part of a broader war drive pushed by Washington against countries targeted as points on an "axis of evil," including Iran.



# Buenos Aires aids Washington's anti-Iran campaign

## Iranian officials indicted in AMIA case

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

The government of Iran has strongly rejected accusations by an Argentine judge that Iranian officials were involved in a 1994 car bombing of a Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, that killed 85 people and wounded more than 200. Federal judge Juan José Galeano, chief investigator in the case, issued an indictment against four Iranian officials March 9 and asked Interpol to arrest them.

"As we have stated before, Iran had no involvement in the incident in Argentina, and no evidence implicating Iran has been presented," said Hamid Reza Asefi, an Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson, on Iranian radio. Tehran recalled a top envoy from Argentina in protest.

The renewed accusations against Iran take place at a time when Washington has cranked up its anti-Iran campaign and continues to expand its military presence throughout South America under the banner of fighting "terrorism."

While lacking in evidence against Iran—the so-called "international connection"—the case has been marked by bribes, disappearing evidence and witnesses, and other cover-up efforts by Argentine government officials and police. The police involved, including the Buenos Aires provincial cops, federal police, and SIDE, the state intelligence agency, have been accused by some of the victims' relatives of constituting the "local connection" in the bombing.

Several police officials have been arrested in connection with providing the Renault van used in the deadly bombing. But in nine years, not a single person has been arrested for the actual crime, despite the hundreds of cops assigned to the investigation and support from the U.S. and Israeli governments.

On July 18, 1994, a powerful blast demolished the seven-story building of the Jewish Mutual Aid Association of Argentina, known by its Spanish initials, AMIA.

Two years earlier, a car bombing of the Israeli embassy had left 29 people dead and 200 wounded.

U.S. and Israeli government officials, along with leaders of organizations claiming to speak for Argentina's large Jewish community, have blamed the Iranian government and the Lebanese resistance organization Hezbollah for both bombings. Some evidence, however, points to involve-

ment by police and military officials, including ultrarightist elements.

In August 1994, shortly after he was assigned to the case, Judge Galeano named as suspects three employees at the Iranian embassy and a former Iranian diplomat. Tehran sharply rejected the charges. Buenos Aires, encouraged by the U.S. government, was on the verge of breaking relations with Tehran until the Argentine Supreme Court voided the arrest orders against the four, citing insufficient evidence.

### Cops tied to case

After a flurry of initial arrests, one individual was found to have a direct link to the attack—Carlos Telleldín, a used car dealer who was accused of selling the van and refitting it for the bombing. Confessing to close ties to the Buenos Aires provincial police, he stated that in exchange for protection money the cops did not interfere with his dealings in stolen cars. Telleldín is the son of a retired police official who during the U.S.-backed military dictatorship ran a clandestine torture center.

In 1996, three senior police officials and a retired cop, who ran a protection racket for car thieves, were charged as accessories to the bombing. One of the four, Commissioner Juan José Ribelli, had received \$2.5 million the week before the attack.

Evidence also emerged of police involvement in the 1992 Israeli embassy case. A police radio recording indicated that a patrol car covering the embassy grounds was ordered to report to the foreign ministry minutes before the bomb went off. All mention of the instructions to the cop to go to the ministry were omitted from the police records of those events.

Evidence was stolen from Galeano's office, including a video of a meeting between the federal judge and Telleldín, which appears to show Galeano bribing Telleldín to implicate a group of provincial cops. Former interior minister Nilda Garré reported that 66 tapes of intercepted phone conversations disappeared from federal police and SIDE offices, and that police logbooks were altered. She accused state intelligence, the federal police, and other government agencies of a cover-up.

In December 1995, several army officials were arrested in connection with the



Above: Militant/Martín Koppel

Peasants at farm they occupied near the Triple Border area in Caaguazú, Paraguay, speak to *Militant* reporters July 2002. They said that the real target of the U.S.-led "antiterrorist" campaign, backed by Buenos Aires, is the working-class resistance in Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.



AMIA case.

One of these, Sgt. Jorge Pacifico, who had been placed near the scene of the bombing, is a leader of the fascist-minded, virulently anti-Semitic party MODIN, headed by former lieutenant colonel Aldo Rico and other right-wing army officers who spearheaded military revolts against the government in the 1980s. Large amounts of ammunition, weapons, and explosives were found in the homes of several of the officers, who were accused of stealing arms from the army and selling them to criminals. In 2001 a federal court convicted three of the officers on minor charges of illegal weapons possession.

In 1998 Argentine officials claimed proof of Tehran's involvement in the AMIA case and expelled seven Iranian embassy officials after a defector from the Iranian government, a former Iranian intelligence official named Abdolghassem Mesbahi, asserted that Mohsen Rabbani, Iran's cultural attaché in Argentina, had helped plan the bombing. He claimed Rabbani got help from Argentine cops and Iranian agents who had supposedly entered Argentina through the Paraguayan city of Ciudad del Este in the Triple Border area, where there is a large Lebanese immigrant community.

Mesbahi even claimed that two top Iranian leaders, then-president Hashemi Rafsanjani and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, personally ordered, organized, and financed the attack on the cultural center, and that they were behind the 1992 blast.

The recent indictments against four Iranian officials echo Mesbahi's charges. The four are Rabbani; former minister of secu-

rity and intelligence Ali Fallahian; Ali Balesh Abadi, a diplomatic courier; and former education minister Ali Akbar Parvaresh. In addition, Mesbahi accused former Argentine president Carlos Menem of taking a \$10 million bribe from Iran to cover up the authors of the bombing.

To top off the swirl of charges and countercharges, some officials and big-business commentators assert that the culprit is the Syrian regime and Menem's alleged financial connections to it. Telleldín claims that in 1995 Menem offered him \$2 million if he blamed a group of Lebanese immigrants in Paraguay who were being detained in connection with the AMIA bombing. In Argentina there is a large Syrian-Lebanese community, including Menem's family.

### U.S. military there to fight 'terrorism'

The U.S. government has used the AMIA case as ammunition for its campaign to brand Tehran a "terrorist" government and a point on an "axis of evil." This propaganda campaign by Washington against Tehran has escalated with the unfolding U.S.-led assault on Iraq. Much of it has focused on the Triple Border area. Lurid stories have appeared in the big-business press portraying the area, centered in the Paraguayan city of Ciudad del Este, as a base for Hezbollah and Al Qaeda.

With Washington's encouragement, the Paraguayan government has conducted an "antiterrorist" campaign directed at the Arab community in Ciudad del Este. For example, it has harassed Ahmed Barakat, a businessman and acknowledged Hezbollah supporter who raises funds for Islamic social organizations. The authorities accused Barakat of using the money to finance "terrorism" in the Mideast, but have been unable to prove any misuse of funds. After September 11, 2001, the government conducted police raids and arrested 21 Paraguayan Arabs, mostly on minor charges like expired visas.

Under the cover of this "antiterrorist" crusade, Washington has been expanding its military presence in the Triple Border area, including an unofficial military facility near the city of Concepción. In an interview in Ciudad del Este in July 2002, local unionists and peasant leaders told *Militant* reporters the real target is the growing social protests in Paraguay, northern Argentina, and Brazil in response to the economic disaster hitting workers and farmers throughout the region.

For several years, relatives of the victims of the AMIA bombing have been holding angry protests over the refusal by the Argentine authorities to conduct a serious investigation. Last July 18, on the eighth anniversary of the case, several thousand people rallied at the site of the Jewish center and condemned government officials for what one speaker called the "diversions, cover-ups, and lies."

A second protest rally, called by the Group to Present the Truth about the Unpunished Massacre at AMIA, heard speakers from the human rights group Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and organizations of unemployed workers. The main slogan was, "The Argentine government is the local connection in the AMIA attack."

## Five Cubans in U.S. jails remain in 'hole'

BY RÓGER CALERO

After weeks of solitary confinement, five Cuban patriots jailed in the U.S. are being allowed to see their defense attorneys.

The five men—Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, René González, and Fernando González—had not been permitted to see their lawyers, families, and supporters since they were thrown into the "hole" February 28. Hernández, who is jailed at the maximum security federal prison at Lompoc, California, has been in "the Box" within the Special Housing Unit—a hole within the "hole"—since that time. Defense attorney Leonard Weinglass was finally allowed to visit Hernández March 16 after repeated requests to the government.

Since they were framed up and convicted in June 2001, the five Cuban revolutionaries are being held in five different prisons thousands of miles from each other, where they are serving sentences ranging from 15 years to a double-life term.

These latest measures against the five come as their legal team prepares for an April 7 appeals hearing on their case. Their arbitrary placement in isolation is a violation of their right to due process of law, their right to legal counsel, and protection against cruel and unusual punishment, their defense team says.

The government claims that the five were removed from the general prison population, and their visitation rights cut off, because they are a potential threat to "national security." According to Weinglass, who is Antonio Guerrero's attorney and part of the overall legal defense for the five, the solitary confinement is part of a "special administrative" order from U.S. attorney general John Ashcroft to the Bureau of Prisons. The order claims that the contact the five have maintained—by mail or in person—with other people could result in the unauthorized disclosure of information that "could pose a threat to the national security of the United States." The order lasts for a year and can be extended at any time by the attorney general.

The five were framed up by the FBI and convicted on conspiracy charges, including conspiracy to commit espionage for the Cuban government and murder. They have maintained all along that they were in the United States to collect information on the activities of counterrevolutionary groups that have a history of launching violent attacks on Cuba from U.S. soil.

Since their imprisonment following the convictions, the five have refused to be broken—maintaining their public pride for defending their country's sovereignty. They have also kept in contact with revolution-

ists and other vanguard workers in the United States, becoming part of the class struggle in this country and setting an example for other inmates.

Since February 28, the five have been under strict isolation from other prisoners and the outside world, and are being denied access to any reading or printed material. In the case of Hernández the prison authorities have confiscated his legal mail and correspondence sent by his attorney, as well as his personal items. He has also been restricted to a cell where he can barely take three steps and is forced to wear only underpants and a shirt.

Even though the right of the five to see their attorneys was restored, the conversations will be monitored by prison authorities, in violation of the lawyer-client privilege of confidentiality.

On March 12, defense attorneys filed a motion with the Southern Florida District Court to request an immediate end to their solitary confinement and to transfer the five to a facility within that district or to free them on bail during the appeals process.

Messages demanding the five be let out of the hole can be sent to Kathleen Hawk Sawyer, Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, 320 First St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20534; tel: (202) 307-3198; fax: (202) 514-6620; e-mail: webmaster@bop.gov.



# The making of a trade union bureaucrat

Printed below are excerpts from *A Political Biography of Walter Reuther: The Record of an Opportunist*, by Beatrice Hansen—one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for March. This pamphlet contains the case history of the formation and evolution of Walter Reuther, president of the United Auto Workers union from 1946 to 1970. These excerpts are taken from an article by Farrell Dobbs that is included in the pamphlet, titled "Meany vs. Reuther: Basic issues reflected," which originally appeared in the Jan. 16, 1967, issue of the *Militant*. Copyright © 1969, 1987 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.



BY FARRELL DOBBS

The general run of hucksters who pose as "news analysts" in the capitalist press have

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

one thing in common: They tend to reduce issues to the small change of personal conflict. They are well paid for the diversion from honest discussion of serious matters, because outlived capitalism can't afford frank talk. Too many people would become aware of the need for a basic social change.

A deceptive appearance is given of treating things seriously without actually doing so. In the process a plug is gotten in for a basic norm of the capitalist rat race. People are taught that only one thing counts in all

situations: What's in it for Number One?

With this approach the hucksters quickly get to the nub of the dispute between Walter Reuther and George Meany in the top bureaucracy of the AFL-CIO. When the two labor federations merged in 1955, Meany headed the AFL and Reuther, the CIO. Meany got the top spot in the merger, while Reuther had to play second fiddle. So—Reuther wants Meany's job.

Only Reuther and Meany themselves can be fully aware of their personal aspirations in the current dispute and, for others, such aims are of no importance. It is the larger aspects of developments within the AFL-CIO that count. Clues to really important matters in the dispute can be found by probing into various key questions, for example: the present situation and needs of the AFL-CIO membership; Meany's policy and what Reuther has to offer in its place. Before examining these questions in particular, a few generalizations seem in order.

The overall picture indicates that a palace revolt is developing within the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, one similar to the Abel-McDonald dispute in the steel union. As was the case with McDonald, Meany's policies have gotten dangerously out of gear with the needs of the union membership. Among other bureaucrats, such as Reuther, a feeling is growing that something must be done about it or the whole bureaucracy will face a rank-and-file uprising. When examined from this viewpoint, Reuther's present line—although failing to meet the workers' needs—reflects at least a distorted image of significant new labor trends.

Working people are showing increased concern and resentment over losses in buying power because of [Vietnam] War-inflated prices. They are worried about the growing gap between earnings and take-home pay due to tax gouging, imposed mainly to finance an unpopular war. As a result they tend to brush aside [President] Johnson's "guideposts" and press demands for "catch-up" pay increases. There is also growing pressure for an escalator clause in union contracts to keep wages abreast of rising living costs.

Other key issues impelling workers toward struggle are speedup and bad working conditions, and in some industries they are rapidly being automated out of jobs. Grievances arising over these general is-



Walter Reuther, president of the United Auto Workers, at 1961 AFL-CIO convention.

sues continue to mount, clogging the present defective apparatus for handling them. Under the impact of these frustrations workers have shown growing militancy across the last year, and the trend is spreading throughout the class....

### Demagogic stand

Like a Democrat running for office, Reuther seeks to divert political attention from basic class issues by stressing reform aims that lend themselves to tokenism and gradualism. He does so through demagogic stress on important social needs such as improved education, social security, and health care; also on problems like urban renewal, air and water pollution, etc. This in turn gives him a bridge toward collaboration with liberal capitalist politicians, a subject he has failed to mention in criticizing Meany's policies.

The fact is that Reuther has no important differences with Meany on the question of keeping labor enslaved in capitalist politics. At the 1966 UAW convention he denounced any attempt to break away from the Democratic Party, asserting that he was "not going to flirt with that kind of reckless, dangerous idea of forming labor's own political party." He said, "Labor must seek a basic realignment of the two major political parties, which would get all the reactionaries in the Republican Party where they belong and make the Democratic Party a truly

liberal people's party." This "realignment" fantasy is simply a demagogic device to keep labor tied to a party run by a gang of strikebreakers, racists, and warlords.

On every major count Reuther's policies show that AFL-CIO members would have nothing going for them in any "democratic" debate he might have with Meany inside the Executive Council. What the workers need is a genuine left wing in the unions based upon rank-and-file militants. To be effective the left wing should be constructed around a program of concrete demands. These should include:

Full and unfettered membership discussion of all problems confronting the workers, and rank-and-file control over all union affairs.

A cost-of-living escalator in union contracts to offset rising prices.

A reduced workweek with no cut in pay. Unemployment compensation at union wages for all jobless persons eighteen or over, whether or not they have been previously employed.

Equal rights in the unions and on the job for Black workers and for members of other minorities. Full union support to the civil rights struggle as a whole.

Bring the troops home now. Use the money spent for war to meet social needs here at home.

Build an independent labor party based on the unions.

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**March**

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**Remember, Liberated Afghanistan?**—A grim AP photo of a 2-year-old boy in Kabul, capital



Harry Ring

of Afghanistan. His belly is swollen with hunger. He can't walk or even crawl because of hunger. In Kabul in 2001, the photo caption reported, 6 percent of children suffered malnutrition. In 2002, with the U.S. takeover, it shot up to 11 percent.

**A spreading poison**—In Vir-

ginia, it's called Project Exile. Now, it's spread to Baltimore, Maryland. In both cases, people convicted of violation of gun laws are sent to prisons in distant areas, a major obstacle for visits by relatives, friends and legal advisers.

The same reactionary practice is being used against the Cuban Five, railroaded to prison on trumped-up charges.

**Colorado leads nation?**—According to the *Denver Post*, each week 1,000 people in the state exhaust their jobless checks. Comments the director of food and energy assistance programs for the state's human services department: "Even this year, when it hasn't been as cold, we're still going to serve more people than we have in the history of the program."

**Freebie market gains**—"While automakers continue to pile up cheap loans, deep discounts, and soaring rebates on cars and trucks, dealers are adding cruisers, sports tickets, computers, and free gas to lure buyers. Dealers say it's a way to reach consumers who know they don't have to hurry in today to get a deal because tomorrow's offer will probably be better."—*USA Today*.

**Waste not, want not**—"The recycling of old sandwiches, which are sold as fresh,...is to be investigated by the Food Standard Agency. Old bread and butter is discarded, but fillings are reused in fresh bread. The scam is also believed to involve chilled food, such as cooked meats, pies and 'ready meals'."—*The Times*, London.

**Recycled sandwich victims?**—The UK government has told the National Health Service that by the end of this year, hospitals should stop designating corridors as observation wards. It specifies that there be a four-hour waiting limit in accident and emergency units. Also instructed to be ended is the practice of holding patients in ambulances, presumably waiting for corridor space.

**Just doing his duty**—Officials in San Jose, California, agreed to pay \$390,000 to a man who, five years ago, suffered a cracked skull and broken arm by Robert Reinhart, a cop who the *Los Angeles Times* says was looking for a robbery suspect. The paper covered the case in a news brief. It apparently lacked the space to

squeeze in the name of the aggrieved person.

**By the ton and for the pound**—Eurocare Environmental Services has contracts covering 25 percent of clinical waste disposal at the UK's National Health Service hospitals. For an extended period it allowed human clinical waste—including human tissue and blood—to rot in trailers parked mainly in industrial areas. When filled to capacity, some were dumped into septic tanks and from there into a river.

One trailer was found leaking blood, and one so jam-packed that environmental agents refused to open the door for fear of a spill. The company was fined about \$150,000—said to be the max—plus a bit more in court costs.

# Communist League launches Quebec campaign

BY JOANNE PRITCHARD

MONTREAL—The night the provincial elections were called, March 12, the Communist League announced its candidates for the Quebec National Assembly: Sylvie Charbin and Yannick Duguay. The elections will take place April 14.

Quebec, the second-largest province in Canada with a population of close to 7.5 million, is an oppressed nation within Canada. The French-speaking majority of Quebec—80 percent of the population—faces systematic discrimination on the basis of their language and are denied the right to national self-determination.

The two communist candidates are running in Montreal. Charbin, 52, a garment worker, is running in the riding of Laurier-Dorion. Duguay, 24, a butcher in a meatpacking plant near Montreal, is running in the neighboring riding (district) of Viau. He is a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union and of the Young Socialists.

On February 24, Charbin addressed a rally that was held at the downtown offices of the Canadian immigration police in support of hundreds of Algerian refugees fighting to remain in Canada.

"The Communist League campaign in the upcoming Quebec elections is unlike that of any of the other parties," she said.

"Our campaign is a tribute for the workers, farmers and youth, here and abroad, who are looking for ways to defend their rights against the devastating attacks by the employers on our standard of living, our rights and our working conditions."

This point was brought home when Charbin, a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, was "indefinitely suspended" from her job as a sewing machine operator in the midst of a drive by her boss to speed up production. Fighting to get her job back with the help of her coworkers and her union became part of her campaign, and she explained that her firing was part of a broader attack on workers there. On March 17 she won her job back.

At an International Women's Day event organized by the Montreal chapter of the Quebec Women's Federation on March 8 to discuss and protest "the war at home and the war abroad," Charbin spoke from the floor. "While the Canadian government says it will not send troops to Iraq without United Nations approval," she said, "Canadian armed forces are already involved."

"Canadian naval frigates with 950 Canadian troops have been enforcing the naval blockade against Iraq in the Arab-Persian Gulf since last fall, and a Canadian naval commodore is now directing Task Force 151, a fleet of 20 patrol ships from six different countries that is in the Gulf. In recent weeks 2,800 Canadian soldiers have been added to the imperialist occupation force in Afghanistan—under the 'United Nations peacekeeping' banner—to allow U.S. troops stationed there to be deployed to preparations for war against Iraq."

For the first time since 1976 in Quebec, three major bourgeois parties are running in this election. The incumbent Parti Quebecois (PQ) is promising "a four-day workweek," with loss of pay, for parents with young children as a way to improve the living conditions of working people; it takes a



The Militant/Grant Hargrave

**Yannick Duguay, right, Communist League candidate for Quebec National Assembly, campaigns in Montreal. Duguay, 24, is a member of the Young Socialists.**

position of supporting Quebec sovereignty. The Quebec Liberal Party (PLQ), a staunch opponent of Quebec independence, has sought support by promising new funding for the beleaguered health-care system.

Formed in the mid-1990s from a split in the PLQ, the Quebec Democratic Action party (ADQ) runs an openly rightist campaign. A year ago it was leading high in the polls and won four of six by-elections; it is now last in the polls.

The ADQ has been promoting partial privatization of the health-care and education systems. It has sharply denounced what it describes as collusion between the PQ government and the trade unions.

The Quebec Federation of Labor has called for a vote to the PQ, calling it more "union-friendly." The leadership of the National Trade Union Federation (CSN) is urging working people to cast a "strategic" vote, that is, for the PQ or PLQ candidate most likely to win against the ADQ in any given riding. The first time in decades a trade union federation in Quebec has urged a vote for the PLQ.

"Some of the young people I have met on campuses and in antiwar actions have asked me what I think of the Union of Progressive Forces (UFP)," said Duguay. The UFP is a coalition created a year ago by the Quebec wing of the Stalinist Communist Party of Canada and two Quebec-based social-democratic groupings.

"The UFP," Duguay said, "proposes to reform capitalism through elections. Under capitalism, any significant reform in the interest of working people is always the result of a revolutionary struggle."

Communist League candidates used their campaign to urge working people and youth to participate in a large demonstration against the war in Iraq held here March 15. They joined the picket lines of Vidéotron cable TV workers, who have been on strike for 10 months, and of those of the 2,000 support workers at the University of Montreal.

Charbin and Duguay demand the immediate release of two Basque political prisoners, Gorka Perea Salazar and Eduardo Plagaro Pérez de Arriluzea, who have been held in a prison outside Montreal since June 2001 as they await possible extradi-

tion to Spain, where they face repression.

The two communist candidates have called for the Canadian government to open the border to Pakistani refugees it currently turns back at the U.S.-Canada bor-

## — 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



April 7, 1978

Having shattered the coal operators dream for a housebroken work force, miners returned to work March 27 after an historic 110-day strike.

They overwhelmingly rejected two contract offers. They defied Carter's Taft-Hartley back-to-work order. They won massive support from other working people across the country.

On the third contract proposal, the ranks of the United Mine Workers finally voted 57 percent to 43 percent for acceptance.

"Although the agreement falls short of our expectations, the rank-and-file can take a lot of credit for blocking management's efforts to destroy our union," declared Jack Perry, president of southern West Virginia's District 17. "To that extent, miners have won a major victory."

The fact is that the determined rank-and-file battle against the coal bosses and government *strengthened the miners' union*.

The miners fought back against the bosses' drive to cripple the union.

The miners used the steps they had won toward union democracy—especially the right to read, discuss, and vote on their contract—to force the coal operators to back down.

The miners stood up to strikebreaking action by the president of the United States.

And the miners defeated the attempts to pit other workers against them and went on to win the solidarity and material aid of unionists across the country.

This example dramatically altered the expectations and consciousness of millions of other working people.



April 6, 1953

The snooper with the big ears, who has really come into his own with the witch-hunt, may now receive an official stamp of approval. Attorney General Brownell is preparing to ask Congress to legalize the use of evidence obtained by wiretapping "in cases of espionage."

The invasion of individual privacy by wiretapping is so widespread that many people are surprised to learn that until Congress gets around to rectifying the situation, the practice is actually illegal.

In 1934, Congress incorporated into the Federal Communications Act a clause intended to outlaw all wiretapping. Violations carried a two-year prison term, a \$10,000 fine, or both.

In the 19 years since the passage of that law, one lone individual has been prosecuted and convicted. That was a private citizen who got caught cutting in on the phone conversations of a government agency.

The government's stubborn refusal to prosecute anyone else for violating this law was best explained in a candid moment by former Attorney General Jackson, who said, "I cannot feel that the Department of Justice can in good conscience prosecute persons...for a practice...engaged in by the Department itself."

It is precisely this government violation of the law, and its ignoring of its violation by others, that has made this insidious perversion of constitutional rights so common a practice.



# Troops out of Mideast now!

**Continued from front page**  
forces in Iraq to maintain and increase its world domination in face of challenges by its imperialist rivals. “Operation Iraqi Freedom” has nothing to do with liberty or human rights—at least not for working people. It is about which of the imperialist powers will control the strategic oil and mineral platform Iraq and Kuwait sit on. It is also about propping up the U.S. dollar. All oil transactions by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, for example, are carried out in U.S. dollars. Baghdad has been the only exception, using the euro at the prodding of the French regime. Tehran has also announced it is considering switching to the euro.

At the heart of the conflict is the interimperialist competition over redividing the world, as the capitalist system sinks into a prolonged depression. Washington and London, on one hand, and Paris and Berlin, on the other, are the main unstable poles. Paris as well as Berlin, “the sick man of Europe,” have already been dealt major blows by U.S. imperialism. Washington has made it clear it will put in place a U.S. military occupation regime in Iraq, icing out competitors that profited handsomely from lucrative contracts in Iraq over the past 12 years.

In the process, many of the sacred post-World War II institutions of the “civilized West” are quickly beginning to crumble. Washington and Ankara, two NATO members, for example, will likely face off at the Iraqi-Turkish border if the government of Turkey sends troops into northern Iraq. The likelihood that the UN Security Council will be used again as an effective instrument for advancing imperialism’s interests has diminished.

Today’s events make it easier to see that the ultimate logic of the conflict is a march toward a third world war.

With the unfolding of the war, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has become one of most effective spokespeople for the U.S. ruling class. He seems to be winning the argument among the U.S. rulers that a smaller, more agile army going into battle with overwhelming force can win, enabling the U.S. empire to wage two major wars at once. This military strategy is essential for U.S. imperialism as Washington pursues a course toward more wars along its “axis of evil.”

As the first body bags began to be filled with U.S. soldiers and the Iraqi army captured American prisoners, Rumsfeld and other U.S. officials cynically claimed that Baghdad, and the Qatar-based Al Jazeera TV network, were violating the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war. That is the same government that has asserted its prerogative to maintain under indefinite detention—and without charges—hundreds of prisoners of war from Afghanistan at a concentration camp at the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo—land stolen from the Cuban

people by force. These men have been kept in tiny chicken cages, subjected to physical and psychological torture.

The imperialist invaders have acknowledged they have met stiffer resistance than they had led bourgeois public opinion believe was to be expected. Instead of welcoming the U.S. and British armies as liberators, many Iraqis have resisted the invasion. They defend their country’s sovereignty and should be supported by working people around the world. Some of them remember the brutality and plunder by the British colonial rulers before Iraq won its independence.

The imperialist invaders take advantage of the fact that the capitalist regime in Iraq today, which is based on a party-police state, cannot mobilize the toiling masses to protect their national sovereignty in face of the imperialist onslaught. Its toppling by Washington, however, will be a blow to working people.

U.S. imperialism is likely to score a relatively quick military victory in Iraq. But the outcome of the war won’t salvage the profit system from its downward slide in the curve of capitalism development. Irresolvable contradictions and conflicts will grow, and imperialist domination and brutality will engender new social explosions with unforeseen consequences. National liberation struggles may erupt out of the flames, as the Kurdish struggle did after the 1991 Gulf War.

Leading up to the start of the invasion, which Washington and London had carefully prepared over the past several months, millions around the world believed mass peace protests could somehow prevent the war. While pacifist illusions have not been and will not be shattered for many, there are young people and others who at first join peace protests thinking they are doing something effective to stop the horror of imperialist war. In the process, a number realize their approach is not effective and begin to search for one that is. Class-conscious workers can help by explaining the history of imperialism and its wars—including the first and second world slaughters—and that no antiwar protests have ever prevented such conflicts. Those seeking answers can learn how in October 1917, a social revolution in Russia was able to put an end to imperialist war through workers and farmers taking political power. Now is the moment for all those who become interested in these life-and-death questions for humanity to study and get out the facts together.

Above all, what’s decisive is the workers who refuse to subordinate their struggles to “national unity” and “homeland defense.” That is the beginning of resistance to imperialist war by our class, the only class that can stop the imperialist warmongers once and for all by taking power out of their hands, overturning capitalism, and joining the worldwide struggle to build a socialist society.

# Solidarity with Tyson strikers

“Failure is not an option.” Working people throughout the United States and elsewhere need to adopt this slogan of the strikers at Tyson in Jefferson, Wisconsin. Unionists and other workers, farmers, and youth need to join these United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 538 members to build the broadest possible solidarity with their struggle to prevent massive concessions at this meat processing plant. The company has drawn the battle lines by preparing to bring in more scabs to break the strike.

In joining with these workers to oppose the company’s demand for a two-tier wage system, working people can deal a blow to this time-worn divide-and-conquer scheme of the bosses. Standing up together with these workers and opposing the company’s proposal to increase health-care premiums, eliminate health-care for retirees, cut sick leave and disability benefits strengthens the potential for a fight to defend other hard won gains.

The strikers have organized “Truth Squads” to leaflet and collect donations at Tyson and other plants, starting in the Midwest. These squads should be invited to speak before unions, on campuses, before organizations defending the rights of immigrants, Black rights groups, and else-

where. The “Truth Squads” are an example of the confidence and capacity of the workers to use their union to reach out to others to conduct an effective fight. They will also be a confirmation of the statement by revolutionary leader Malcolm X that travel broadens your horizons.

The bosses have sent out flyers in English, Spanish, and Chinese in hopes that laid-off immigrant workers, in particular from a Tyson plant in Chicago, will scab on the strike. Immigrant workers, however, increasingly make up a majority in the big meat processing and packing centers. Many are also in the forefront of the fight against the bosses’ offensive on our standard of living. Some are part of a broadening vanguard of workers that resists the attacks by the bosses and their government.

Opponents of the U.S.-led war against the people of Iraq should join in this fight. The same crisis of the profit system that breeds imperialist wars drives Tyson and other employers to deepen their assault on working people at home. Build the March 29 UFCW solidarity rally in Jefferson and join the strikers in their determined struggle to beat back Tyson!

# Antiwar protests span the globe

**Continued from Page 15**  
capital, San Juan, March 24 against the war.

Rolling protests in Spain brought hundreds of thousands into the streets each day the first three days of the war. These built up on March 22 to demonstrations of several hundred thousand in Barcelona and another of 100,000 in Madrid against the Spanish government’s involvement in the imperialist assault. A quarter of a million marched in London the same day.

In Athens, Greece, some 150,000 protested against the war March 21. In Germany, whose government is part of the same imperialist bloc as Paris and Athens, protests spread to Berlin and other cities.

U.S. embassies and diplomatic offices in some Arab-Persian Gulf countries remained closed March 23, a day after three protesters were fatally shot by the police in Yemen at a demonstration of 30,000 who clashed with cops in front of the U.S. embassy. Over 15,000 students

protested at four Egyptian universities March 23.

In Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, demonstrators threw stones and empty bottles at the U.S. embassy and thousands marched to a United Nations office. In Jordan police repeatedly clashed with thousands of angry students lambasting the U.S. slaughter next door.

With a U.S.-led occupation army still fighting in their country, about 1,000 antiwar protesters took to the streets in Mehtar Lam, Afghanistan. Other protests spread in New Zealand, Vietnam, Thailand, and South Korea. In Australia, whose government has sent 2,000 troops to join the “coalition of the willing,” tens of thousands joined protests March 23. About 100,000 marched in Lahore, Pakistan, the same day. Thousands rallied in several Japanese cities, including Hiroshima, at a memorial for the 250,000 killed by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by Washington—the only government that has ever used nuclear weapons.

# ‘Militant’ staff writer takes on new assignment

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

Beginning with this issue, *Militant* staff writer Maurice Williams is released from the paper’s staff to take another assignment as part of building the socialist movement.

Williams served on the *Militant*’s staff for nine years, beginning in 1994. He shouldered a broad range of writing responsibilities — from covering the Palestinian national liberation movement and the fight for self-determination in Chechnya, to the struggle to defend affirmative action and expose the attacks by the U.S. rulers on the social wage and on workers’ rights at home. At the same time he was also the paper’s business manager for half a decade and the director of many campaigns to win new readers. Recently, he was in charge of the paper’s Prisoners Fund, which makes it possible to send subscriptions to inmates at reduced rates.

Williams, 46, joined the communist movement in 1981 in Atlanta. He was part of Black nationalist groups in the two preceding years. While in Atlanta, he ran as the Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress and took part in an internationalist solidarity brigade to pick cotton in Leon, Nicaragua. A workers and farmers government ruled that country at the time, having come to power as a result of the 1979 popular revolution that overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza. As a member of the National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP) he also visited Grenada in 1982, as part of an NBIPP tour of that country. The revolutionary government of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop was in power at the time in that Caribbean nation.

Immediately prior to joining the *Militant* staff, Williams was a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers and worked at the Monfort (now Swift) meatpacking plant in Marshalltown, Iowa. Earlier, he was a member of the Steelworkers union while working at the LTV steel mill in Cleveland, Ohio.

He is now on his way to Chicago to help build the socialist movement there.

# Lechuga speaks

**Continued from Page 9**

tary agreement between two sovereign nations, such as those the United States signs with its allies. Fidel Castro warned the Soviets that it was necessary, as a normal procedure, to make the agreement public, but Khrushchev didn’t see it that way. This opened up the USSR and Cuba to the charge of deceiving world public opinion.

Cuba’s position was always based on principle, on defending its sovereignty, on defending its right to have all the weapons it deemed necessary to respond to the attacks against it. Cuba did not surrender its right to refuse inspections and it did not agree to negotiate any undermining of its independence.

**Cuban outrage at Soviet leaders’ conduct**

When reading the book, it’s instructive to follow all those discussions, which were taking place in a very tense atmosphere, when the world was often on the verge of nuclear war.

Moscow and Washington, each for their own reasons, kept the outcome a secret: an agreement to withdraw the missiles from Cuba in exchange for the withdrawal of U.S. missiles from Turkey and Italy. This crude truth became known later on, but the U.S. plans to destroy the revolution continued. The negotiations over the crisis did not disrupt U.S. intentions of making Cuba submit to its control. The outcome of the crisis did not offer any guarantee to Cuba.

When the nuclear missiles were withdrawn, the Cuban people expressed great indignation. We should also not forget the response to this move by the Soviet troops, who were willing to defend us against all dangers. That human aspect of the crisis should not be forgotten.

In analyzing how the crisis ended, the book states that for the revolutionary leadership it became clear that the country’s security depends above all on the courage, determination, and willingness of the people to be part of its defense. Any outside support would always be subject to conjunctural factors of international policy, even though solidarity will always play a significant role.

Undoubtedly the events of those days left a sense of disillusionment and bitterness owing to the poor political role played by the Soviet Union in accepting all the U.S. demands.

On the other hand, internationally the situation did not improve. The conflicts that endangered world peace did not end. The arms race continued its accelerated course, with an enormous waste of resources. The economic situation of the underdeveloped countries continued to get worse. But, as the book states, these realities should not feed pessimism about the future. History, the author correctly states, shows that just and noble causes always triumph, regardless of the power of the forces standing in their way.



# Hundreds of thousands rally against war

As U.S. casualties mount, pro-war demonstrations grow in many U.S. cities

BY PAUL PEDERSON

Hundreds of thousands of people poured into Manhattan, largely from the New York region, to participate in a March 22 parade against the U.S.-led war on Iraq. Organizers estimated the crowd at 250,000. Police said “in excess of 125,000” gathered to show their opposition to the war.

Around the world hundreds of thousands joined similar protests as the bombs and missiles rained down on Iraq.

Patriotic demonstrations supporting the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq also took place in several U.S. cities—the biggest such rallies since the launching of the war.

“I believe the war is unnecessary and I doubt what the government says,” said Sara Chaudry, 18, a student at Walt Whitman High School in Long Island who joined the New York march. “I believe this is a war for domination of the Middle East and for control of oil. I’m also concerned about the human cost.”

Chaudry described the pressure that has been coming down on students who openly oppose the war. “Some teachers are fine with our views,” she said. But other teachers and pro-war students have threatened her and other classmates.

“I was saying that it’s not unpatriotic to oppose the war. I said that not everything should be done just for self interest. That’s when one teacher really went crazy,” Chaudry stated, “He told me if I think that way I should leave the country and shut up.”

Most contingents throughout the march carried signs and banners and chanted vari-

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### PENNSYLVANIA Philadelphia

**Bring the Troops Home Now** Speaker: John Staggs, member UFCW, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 28. Program, 7:30 p.m. 5237 N. 5th St. Donation: \$4 for program. (215) 324-7020.

### WASHINGTON D.C.

**Defend Affirmative Action** Speaker: Darryl Sheppard, Young Socialists. Fri., March 28. Dinner 6:30 p.m. Program 7:30 p.m. 3437 14th Street, NW. Donation: Program \$4, Dinner \$5. (202) 387-1590.

## —LETTERS—

### Pro-war rally

Yesterday (March 22) some 5,000 people participated in an antiwar demonstration here. *Militant* supporters set up a table and completely sold out of our bundle of 50 papers.

Meanwhile, at the state capitol in St. Paul some 17,000 people showed up at a rally to “Support Our Troops.” While that rally was billed as “neither pro-war or antiwar” the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* reported that it had “moments that were fervently pro-war.” These included “Prevent Terrorism! Bomb Saddam” signs, heckling of Democratic Party politicians who didn’t show up, and repeated chants of “U-S-A! U-S-A!” The paper reported that a Muslim speaker at the rally, N. Ruby Zigrino, received a hostile reception. According to the *Star-Tribune*, “She was initially cheered when she said she supports ‘ousting a tyrant regime.’ But she then read passages from the Qur’an, suggested that a new Marshall Plan will be needed in Iraq, and said administration officials should study foreign-policy failures to avoid repeating them. Her listeners responded with boos and shouts of ‘Screw Muslims!’ ‘Screw the Qur’an!’ and ‘Go home.’”

Students Against War, one of many student peace groups, circulated a call to show up at the capitol with signs to say that “Supporting our troops means bringing them home.”

A photographer who covered both events stopped by the *Militant* table and said that she saw a dozen or so antiwar protesters who were completely surrounded by a hostile, threatening crowd, many of



Militant/Salm Kolis

Between 125,000 and a quarter million people demonstrated in New York March 22.

ous “peace” slogans such as—“What do we want? Peace!” and “Give peace a chance.” Slogans and signs aimed at U.S. president George Bush, such as “Drop Bush, not bombs!”, were also prominent. A group of about 100 students from several area universities marched down Manhattan’s 34th Street and fed into the demonstration chanting, “Hell no, we won’t go, we won’t fight for Texaco!” Others took up the popular chant “No blood for oil!”

As in previous demonstrations, support for the French government’s stance on the U.S.-led war against Iraq was expressed on several occasions by some of those marching and along the parade’s route.

At one point a group began singing the French national anthem. A contingent organized by the Young Socialists and Socialist Workers Party countered by chanting, “French troops out of Ivory Coast!” provoking a debate among some at the demonstration about the role of French imperialism.

The daily bloodletting against the Palestinian people by the Israeli army in the occupied territories drew a number of individuals and contingents with Palestinian flags to the action. Chants in support of the Palestinian struggle by these groups were joined a few times by others in the crowd.

United for Peace and Justice and other

groups that called the large peace demonstrations leading up to the war have argued that these protests could stop the war. Most organizations within these coalitions hoped that bourgeois political forces—Democratic party officials, liberal figures in the Bush administration like Colin Powell, the French government or other imperialist powers, or the United Nations—could stay Washington’s hand.

Since Washington launched the slaughter, those who advanced these views have less and less to say.

Unlike all the recent peace demonstrations, the organizers did not plan a rally for either end of the March 22 parade.

The groups that called the previous peace demonstrations over the last few months have not set a date for another national mobilization either.

Instead of a closing rally, a New York Police Department (NYPD) tape recording announcing that “the march is now over” greeted the successive waves of tens of thousands who arrived at Washington Square Park, the end point of the demonstration. Many did not take the NYPD advice and stayed for a while in the park, where political organizations set up literature tables, while musicians and street-theater groups entertained the crowds.

The police presence around the park continued to grow. The situation remained largely peaceful, unlike the February 22

march during which cops were very provocative. In the evening, riot-gear-clad police closed in on the crowd, rounding up and arresting 91 protesters.

### Rallies to ‘Support our troops’

A small number of individuals held pro-war signs and yelled pro-war messages at points along the route of the March 22 New York rally. A group of about 50 supporters of Washington’s slaughter formed a counter demonstration at Washington Square Park.

The following day, 1,000 assembled at Times Square in Manhattan for a pro-war rally to answer the antiwar protest.

Reflecting the deepening polarization around the war, patriotic pro-war demonstrations drew large crowds in a number of other cities around the United States.

A group called “Rally for America” has organized a several-city tour featuring pro-war rallies. The group, headed by Glenn Beck, a right-wing radio commentator in Philadelphia, drew 10,000 to a March 23 rally in Glen Allen, Virginia, and thousands to a rally in Fort Wayne, Indiana, the day before.

On March 23, a flag-waving crowd estimated at nearly 17,000 gathered at the state capitol in St. Paul, Minnesota, for a rally “to support our troops.” The demonstration was organized by a group headed by a retired army colonel. “Prevent Terrorism! Bomb Saddam” signs were sprinkled through the crowd, which repeatedly erupted in chants of “U-S-A! U-S-A! U-S-A!”

At the same time, an antiwar protest drew some 5,000 people in St. Paul.

### Antiwar actions span the globe

In countries around the world hundreds of thousands of antiwar protesters filled the streets as U.S. and British tanks and troops rolled into Iraq.

In Puerto Rico, 10,000 rallied in the

Continued on Page 14

## —CALENDAR—

### WASHINGTON, DC

**Defend Affirmative Action! Save Brown vs. Board of Education!** Civil rights march to the Supreme Court, Tues. April 1. Rally at 9 a.m. East Capitol and First, followed by march. Sponsored by the Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action and Integration, Fight for Equality by Any Means Necessary. (313) 438-3748.

them drunk. She said the police intervened and told the antiwar protesters to leave. Fortunately there were no reports of injuries. This is a good lesson in the importance of judging the relationship of forces, and how not to win political space.

Mark Dayton, the Democratic Party senator, was billed as a speaker at the “Support Our Troops” rally. He didn’t show citing previous commitments, and was booed by the crowd.

Dayton, who is a heir to the Dayton family fortune, is known as a liberal, progressive critic of the Bush administration’s policy toward Iraq. Last week the papers reported that Dayton complained that the Senate had spent over 100 hours debating a single judicial appointment, but not one minute discussing the issue of the war. This week Dayton said that the time for debate and discussion had ended and we should unite behind “our” troops.

Bill Sheer  
St. Paul, Minnesota

### Anti-French chauvinism

What great coverage of Washington’s war drive! In Sam Manuel’s article in the March 24 issue, he mentions the use of the phrase “cheese-eating surrender monkeys” in reference to the French on the TV show *The Simpsons*. This is not a new, war-drive related slur. The episode goes back a while. Another episode, one of their Halloween extravaganzas, entitled “The Omega Man,” featured a meeting of the French cabinet where all the ministers had pronounced frog throats and grunted like frogs.

The undercurrent of anti-French chau-

vinism in U.S. popular culture goes way back. The reactionary demonstrations this past week in front of the French consulate in New York, where people dumped French liquor and carried placards with slogans like “Remember Normandy,” are simply the first organized signs in the streets of such incipient fascist chauvinism that unite “we Americans” against the “weak” and “degenerate” states of the world who just happen to be increasingly sharp competitors against the U.S. ruling class.

The *Simpsons* incidents just go to show that there is nothing inherently progressive about social or political humor in capitalist culture. Usually quite the opposite!

Keep up the splendid work!

Jay Rothermel  
Parma, Ohio

### Stop U.S. aid to Israel!

“Israeli murder of Rachel Corrie—U.S. aid is the story!” picketers chanted as they gathered in front of the U.S. Courthouse in Los Angeles on March 18 as part of coordinated protests in various U.S. cities. Two days earlier, Corrie was fatally crushed as she urged an Israeli bulldozer demolishing a Palestinian home in the Gaza Strip to stop. Other popular chants included “Not a penny, not a dime! Israel out of Palestine!” and “Bush ordered, Sharon obeyed—Only through U.S. aid!”

Barry Schier  
Los Angeles, California

### Can workers prevent war?

The *Militant* recently republished a resolution adopted by the party’s founding con-

vention on “The political situation and the tasks of the party,” from *The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party*. It says, “If the working class is unable to prevent the outbreak of war, and the United States enters directly into it, the SWP stands pledged to the traditional position of revolutionary Marxism. It will utilize the crisis of capitalist rule engendered by the war to prosecute the class struggle with the utmost intransigence, to strengthen the independent labor and revolutionary movements.”

<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2003/mar03/030315/026n2mun.php?origen=index.html>. You can read here how 16 MILLION people went on strike last Friday in SPAIN. Is this an example of the working class attempting to prevent war?

Secondly, is it enough to explain the sudden rush to war?

P.S. Hundreds of thousands are turning out into the streets here in Mexico City at every opportunity, January, February, and March. I recently learned that there are two competing coalitions in the U.S. who are initiating these actions, but the streets are full, regardless of whoever may have issued the call.

Nevin Siders  
Mexico City, Mexico

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.

Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.



# Argentine gov't claims recovery

## Yet children are dying of malnutrition, 60% live under official poverty line

BY MICHAEL ITALIE  
AND ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

The International Monetary Fund advanced \$307 million to the Argentine government March 19, under its loan program with Buenos Aires.

Argentine president Eduardo Duhalde used this as another feather in his cap to claim the economy has “bottomed out,” that the country is finally on the mend a year after a dizzying financial collapse. Last year the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) sank to levels on a par with the United States during the 1930s Great Depression. Duhalde now projects a 4.2 percent GDP growth rate for this year.

Yet children are dying daily of malnutrition in a country not too long ago described as “the Europe” of South America by big-business commentators. Some 59 percent of Argentines, or 22 million people, now live below the official poverty line—defined as a monthly income of less than 750 pesos, or \$242, for a family of four—compared to 39 percent in December 2001. Twenty-eight percent live in “extreme poverty,” double from a year ago. Official joblessness is 18 percent. In some industrial districts in Greater Buenos Aires up to 80 percent of adults are unemployed or work only marginal jobs.

The IMF loan resumption followed a World Bank announcement two days earlier that it will lend Buenos Aires \$2.2 billion over the next six months. With these steps, Washington and other imperialist powers that control these financial institutions hope to restart the siphoning of wealth produced by Argentine working people into the coffers of their banks. This flow came to an abrupt halt a little more than a year ago when Argentina declared its default on the foreign debt and stopped making any payments.

Stating that it simply could not keep up with interest payments, in December 2001, the government of Fernando de la Rúa defaulted on part of Argentina’s \$100 billion foreign debt. De la Rúa, a Radical Party politician who won the 1999 elections from the Peronists in an alliance with another bourgeois party, Frepaso, had obediently carried out the demands of the imperialist bondholders and native capitalists to squeeze more and more from Argentine workers and farmers. His administration had slashed social programs by 30 percent, and the pensions and wages of state workers. He had also raised taxes and imposed a partial freeze on bank withdrawals.

The struggles of unemployed workers, known as *piqueteros*, and other workers and farmers in earlier years catapulted into a social explosion in response to these brutal measures. Working people in city and countryside carried out general strikes, blocked roads, and marched on the streets forcing De la Rúa out of office.

The government of Eduardo Duhalde,



**Argentines at Buenos Aires courthouse March 5 celebrate Supreme Court decision that deposit by province of San Luis, which was converted into devalued pesos a year ago, must be changed back to dollars. While some in middle class hope to recover their savings, a capitalist depression continues to engulf this South American nation.**

appointed by the Argentine Congress in January 2002, ended the 10-year-old policy of pegging the peso to the dollar. This precipitated a 70 percent devaluation of the currency, devastating the buying power of workers’ wages and the savings of retirees, shopkeepers, and others. The GDP shrank by 12 percent last year. The understated official unemployment rate soared to nearly 25 percent. Official statistics indicate that working people face the double burden of record high unemployment and a 75 percent increase in the cost of the basic basket of food for a family.

### ‘Stunted, emaciated children’

After ignoring the developing crisis in the countryside for years, the international big-business press has suddenly taken note of a sharp rise in child hunger and malnutrition. According to an article in the March 2 *New York Times*, Tucumán in northern Argentina, this “garden of the republic,” as this city is often referred to, is now known for its “stunted, emaciated children.” Two-thirds of the 1.3 million inhabitants of Tucumán province live in conditions defined by the government as “extreme poverty.”

The Duhalde government, however, is painting a picture of a country on the way out of the hole. His December decision to partially lift the yearlong freeze on bank withdrawals, known as the *corralito* (little fence), was aimed at winning the confidence of capitalist investors and middle-class layers with savings accounts—to convince them that Argentina is on a stronger financial footing.

The loosening of restrictions on bank withdrawals was followed by the January 16 decision of the IMF to roll over more than \$6 billion in loans owed by Buenos Aires, allowing the government to dodge another default for a few more months. Argentine economy minister Roberto Lavagna had announced there was no chance for any payments without a new deal with IMF.

Complicating the government’s plans, the Argentine Supreme Court ruled in early March against the administration’s handling of the 2002 currency devaluation that came with the end of the peso’s peg to the dollar. In January 2002 Duhalde decreed that all dollar accounts would be converted to pesos, which had lost about 70 percent of their value. This move, along with the freezing of bank withdrawals, had sparked the *cacelrazos*, pot-banging demonstrations largely by middle-class layers, that were a feature of the social explosion a year ago. The banks became fortresses, some guarded around-the-clock by police or armed security guards.

On March 5, the Supreme Court decided

in favor of the provincial government of San Luis, and ordered the national government to restore the province’s \$247 million deposit at its dollar value. Neither the government or the IMF commented on the ruling, which could pave the way for similar cases by others seeking to recover an estimated \$20 billion.

The *Economist* and other big-business media point to administration measures to “halt to the economy’s freefall” as “incipient signs of recovery.” Argentine secretary of finance Guillermo Nielson boasted March 9 that the IMF is “very pleased with the steps we have taken” to mend fences with the banks.

As the government tries to balance between the demands of the imperialist lending institutions to continue to cut social programs, it also fears a resurgence of the worker and farmer struggles that exploded onto the scene with the economic collapse of December 2001. Thus while its policies are guided by the imperialist debt bondage the country is firmly tied to, some of its measures are contradictory.

Buenos Aires has adopted a “Head of Household Plan” that promises \$45 per month to a fraction of the families nationwide facing economic ruin. This monthly sum is less than half of what the government estimates reduces a family to abject poverty. In Argentina, there is no unemployment insurance for most workers.

On March 12, the Argentine Congress passed two tax bills called for by the IMF. It then approved the extension of a program that provided additional income to teachers who have protested against the impact of the depression conditions on their livelihoods. Days earlier, Economy Minister Lavagna had announced he would prevent any further spending in the period before the April 27 presidential elections, vowing there would be “no peso for anyone,” according to the Dow Jones news.

### No clear favorite in April elections

With only weeks to go before the presidential elections, the outcome in a crowded race remains unclear. The *Economist* notes that “for the first time, Argentina will have a run-off ballot” as none of the candidates has gained large popular support. There are five candidates competing from the traditional parties of the Argentine bourgeoisie, the Peronists and the Radicals, in addition to others seeking to win a following against the discredited ruling parties.

Néstor Kirchner and Carlos Menem from the ruling Peronists, and Elisa Carrió, a deputy elected earlier from the opposition Radical party who has formed her own Affirmation for an Egalitarian Republic, are the front runners. None of them, how-

ever, exceed percentages in the mid teens in the polls. Carrió has gained some prominence as a crusader against the corruption of the ruling elite and a social critic. Luis Zamora, a former Trotskyist and member of parliament, has been among the candidates of the petty-bourgeois left that was earlier considered a serious contender in the race. Working people, however, have no voice that defends their class interests in these elections.

### Peronism and the workers movement

Peronism is a bourgeois current that has dominated politics in Argentina since World War II. The Argentine Communist Party, which was the dominant force in the workers movement prior to the second world war, handed the banner of national liberation to this bourgeois nationalist current, with the Stalinist betrayal of working-class struggles leading up to and during World War II. Peronism was able to divert the potential revolutionary struggles of the toilers into capitalist channels in the postwar period; it remains the main obstacle to the development of revolutionary working-class leadership up till now.

None of the radical currents that function in the workers movement of Argentina provide revolutionary leadership today. The Argentine CP is a shadow of its former self, badly discredited by its backing of the 1976–82 military junta and the crumbling of its mentors and paymasters in the Soviet Union more than a decade ago. It pursues a class-collaborationist course similar to that of other Stalinist parties around the world, entering into electoral blocs with other groups like the Trotskyist Movement for Socialism (MST). A number of other groups on the left have followed an ultraleft, sectarian course.

While this lack of proletarian leadership won’t change overnight, as the capitalist crisis grinds away and the ruling class tries to solve its problems at the expense of working people, defensive struggles continue and revolutionary-minded workers and young people try to find answers. Under these conditions, the Argentine bourgeoisie and its imperialist masters abroad do fear the resurgence of a social movement of the toilers. Such a movement could provide fertile ground for the development of revolutionary leadership over time that could become a long-term threat to capitalist rule.

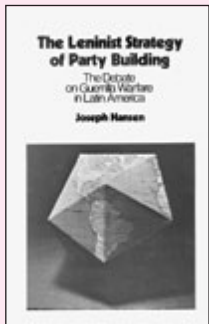
Dow Jones news noted that Congress’s decision to extend the program for teachers was intended to “diffuse what seemed likely to be a wave of protests.” Workers and farmers continue to try to combat the spiraling inflation, record unemployment, and cuts in social programs that have marked the economic collapse.

Transportation workers went on a 24-hour strike in Buenos Aires March 12 against Metrovías, shutting down all trains and buses. The 15,000 unionists are demanding a 41 percent pay raise to partially compensate for the 70 percent loss in value of the peso since the beginning of last year.

The transport workers followed this up with unannounced walkouts that caught the government and bosses off guard. While the company said the union was carrying out an “illegal” strike, union officials said the strikes were needed to force Metrovías to “comply with labor regulations.”

Juan Manuel Palacios of the metro workers union (UTA) said the strike was also called to demand the bosses meet basic “norms of health and safety” on the job. He also demanded that the city government hand down a fine against the company for its failure to implement laws passed last year to address the substandard working conditions on the subways. A UTA spokesperson said if these demands are not met at the March 26 negotiating session, workers will “return to forceful methods” to win a wage increase and safety on the job.

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